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# THE PRINCETON SEMINARY BULLETIN

A Church Both Evangelical and Ecumenical	Eugene C. Blake
Consider the Lilies	George S. Hendry
Kittel among the Coffee Cups	Eugene H. Peterson
The Leap of Faith and the Transitions of Life	Wayne E. Oates
Sermons: Douglas Webster, Eduard Schweizer, and Terence E. Fretheim	
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Nathaniel W. Taylor (1786-1858): On Speaking of the Trinity	B. M. Stephens
Authenticating Christian Experience: A Research Request	J. E. Loder and Mark Laaser

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## THE PRINCETON SEMINARY BULLETIN

DONALD MACLEOD, *Editor*

EDWARD J. JURJI, *Book Review Editor*

THE BULLETIN is published quarterly by The Theological Seminary of the United Presbyterian Church at Princeton, New Jersey. Numbers 1, 2, and 3 of each volume are mailed free of charge to all alumni and on an exchange basis with various institutions. Number 4 in the series is the academic catalogue (undergraduate) of the Seminary and may be obtained only by request to the Office of the Registrar.

# The Princeton Seminary Bulletin

VOL. LXVI

OCTOBER 1973

NUMBER 1

Donald Macleod, Editor

Edward J. Jurji, Book Review Editor

Excerpta et Commentaria: Editor		3
A Church Both Evangelical and Ecumenical	<i>Eugene C. Blake</i>	19
Consider the Lilies	<i>George S. Hendry</i>	25
Kittel among the Coffee Cups	<i>Eugene H. Peterson</i>	33
The Leap of Faith and the Transitions of Life	<i>Wayne E. Oates</i>	37
Sermons:		
For Us Men and Our Salvation	<i>Douglas Webster</i>	45
A Different Kind of Jesus	<i>Eduard Schweizer</i>	55
On Being a Servant	<i>Terence E. Fretheim</i>	59
Issues and Problems in Contemporary Preaching	<i>Ronald E. Sleeth</i>	65
Recent New Testament Interpretation and Preaching	<i>Fred B. Craddock</i>	76
An Experiment in Innovative Preaching	<i>John R. Brokhoff</i>	82
The Ministry as a Profession: An Empirical Assessment	<i>Yoshio Fukuyama</i>	98
Nathaniel W. Taylor (1786-1858): On Speaking of the Trinity	<i>Bruce M. Stephens</i>	113
Authenticating Christian Experience: A Research Request	<i>J. E. Loder and Mark Laaser</i>	120
BOOK REVIEWS:		
Christian Ethics, by Otto A. Piper	<i>Charles C. West</i>	125
The Groundwork of Christian Ethics, by N. H. G. Robinson		126
The Several Israels and an Essay: Religion and Modern Man, by S. Sandmehl	<i>Henry S. Gehman</i>	128
A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, by B. M. Metzger	<i>Morton S. Enslin</i>	129
The Formation of the Christian Bible, by Hans von Campenhausen	<i>Bruce M. Metzger</i>	131
The Acts of the Christian Martyrs, by H. Musurillo		132
The Book of Proverbs, by R. N. Whybray	<i>Glendon E. Bryce</i>	133
Church Union at Midpoint, by P. A. Crow & W. J. Boney	<i>Norman V. Hope</i>	135
Ecumenical Progress: A Decade of Change in the Ecumenical Movement 1961-71, by N. Goodall		135
Religious Liberty in the United States, by Elwyn A. Smith		137
Treatise on Grace & Other Posthumously Published Writings by Jonathan Edwards, ed. by P. Helm	<i>Bruce M. Stephens</i>	138

## BOOK REVIEWS: (continued)

Worship in Crisis, by Henry E. Horn	<i>Donald Macleod</i>	138
Where Cross the Crowded Ways, by Ernest T. Campbell		139
Studies in Texts, Vols. I, II, & III, by Joseph Parker		140
New Hope for Congregations, by Loren B. Mead	<i>Arthur M. Adams</i>	140
The Ministry in Transition, by Yoshio Fukuyama		141
Creative Congregations, ed. by Edgar R. Trexler		141
The New Consciousness in Science and Religion, by H. K. Schilling	<i>E. G. Homrighausen</i>	142
Revelation and Theology, by H. Martin Rumscheidt		142
The New Man: An Orthodox and Reformed Dialogue, ed. by John Meyendorff and Joseph McLelland		145
The Ground of Certainty, by Donald Bloesch	<i>Edwin H. Rian</i>	146
The Modern Military in American Society, by C. W. Ackley	<i>J. P. Crossley, Jr.</i>	146
Book Notes	<i>Donald Macleod</i>	148

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THE ANNUAL  
LECTURESHIPS

1973-1974

*The Annie Kinkead Warfield Lectureship*

February 11-15, 1974

WILLIAM O. FENNELL

*Principal*

*Emmanuel College, Toronto*

*The L. P. Stone Lectureship*

April 15-18, 1974

MARGARET RIGG

*Associate Professor of Art*

*Eckerd College, Florida*

*The Students' Lectureship on Missions*

April 15-18, 1974

BARBARA HALL

*New Testament Scholar*

*Philadelphia Theological Community*

# Excerpta et Commentaria

by the EDITOR

## *WCC after Twenty-five Years*

FEW rank and file American clergymen realized that August, 1973, marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, of the World Council of Churches. Not many editorials or encomiums among religious journalists acknowledged this significant milestone; indeed the most discerning reflections appeared in *The New York Times* (September 1, 1973) under the by-line of the religious editor, Edward B. Fiske.

Fiske's commentary began: "From a cluster of 147 churches, almost all Protestant and Western, it has evolved into a far-flung international organization with representatives of most major Christian traditions and an agenda that is now largely set by churches from the third world.

"The Geneva-based council has become a virtual symbol of the ecumenical movement. It has promoted interfaith dialogue and co-operative projects, has become a spokesman for Protestant and Eastern Orthodox Christianity on world issues and, above all, has kept before Christians of all persuasions a vision of a united church."

On the plateau of this stage of achievement, the Central Committee met in Geneva during the final week of August where they came to grips with some of the problems that accompany success.

The first problem Fiske names is a natural one: the initial idealism can no longer be counted upon as a motivating force. The accession of so many new member churches and the diversity of aims and needs among them have produced "new internal tensions and like all other religious groups the World Council faces a crisis in leadership." Moreover, world crises have precipitated on occasion strong and extreme reactions; hence the Council is "now facing a backlash against what some regard as over-preoccupation with social and political issues in the past decade." Probably the late George G. Beazley (the delegate from the Christian Church in the USA) put it into focus by saying, "We have done things that needed to be done, but now we need to restore some balance. We have neglected the problems of meaning that are the great ones in our technological societies."

A second vexing problem, Fiske indicates, is finance. "The Council has now," he says, "263 member denominations in ninety countries, including African independent churches, pentecostal bodies, and most major Protestant and Orthodox churches. It has a central budget, contributed by members, of about \$2-million a year, and it raises more than \$30-million a year from religious and other sources for designated projects.

"The biggest budget item over the years has been relief and other humanitarian activities. The World Council has resettled almost two million refugees, mainly Eastern European and Middle Eastern, and has operated major relief programs in Biafra and Bangladesh. It is now seeking \$5-million for its new Fund for Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Indochina."

The major issue in the financial situation, however, is the source of the necessary funds and the location of their disbursement. More than half of the Council's financial support comes from America and West Germany, the old countries, whereas the primary concerns of the Council today are not over East-West issues but the third world. Fiske writes, "The most definitive change in the Council has been the shift in its center of gravity from the churches of the North Atlantic to those of the third world. . . . The shift has been reflected in both voting power and personnel. Churchmen from the third world, who made up 23 per cent of the voting delegates at the Amsterdam assembly, will account for 42 per cent at the next in Jakarta in 1975. The first two General Secretaries, the Reverend W. A. Visser't Hooft and the Reverend Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, were Dutch and American respectively; the current one, the Reverend Philip A. Potter, is a West Indian."

A third concern is not so much a problem as it is part of the growing pains of the World Council of Churches. Fiske describes the change which has occurred in both the climate and expression of the Council's theological affirmations. "The theological work of the Council," he writes, "once conducted almost entirely within the framework of the European academic tradition, has begun to be concerned with such third-world problems as the theological implications of cultural identity. More tolerance of diverse theological styles is being shown."

"The concept of ecumenism, too, has been dramatically altered. In 1948, leaders were optimistic that the council would be a temporary vehicle whose principal ecumenical task would be to serve as a catalyst for church mergers. Since then, however, there have been few major breakthroughs in church unity, and many Western churchmen, suspicious of creating new bureaucracies, have simply lost interest in the subject. At the same time, the third-world Christians tend to perceive disunity as essentially a Western problem and have turned their attention elsewhere. Moreover, recent thinking has taken the idea of ecumenism a step further. Council leaders have begun to assert that the unity of the churches is inevitably tied up with the healing of racial, economic and other divisions among mankind and to shift the focus of ecumenical efforts from serving the churches to serving the world." Indeed, Reverend Paul Verghese, a Syrian Orthodox representative from India, remarked, "It is more important that the churches be effective than that they be united."

Intermixed with and auxiliary to these more serious problems are other issues Fiske names in passing. There are: the lessening of interest in the Council on the part of the American churches and the feeling among Western European churches that the focus of the Council is directed elsewhere; the complaint from the Eastern Orthodox Christians that the Council is preoccupied with "socio-political aims" and that the "theological presuppositions of social programs" were receiving



scant attention; the impression has been abroad that the Council is an "elitist organization"—the playground of the ecclesiastical titans—and out of communication with the "grass-roots elements of its worldwide constituency"; its outlook, style, and organization have been essentially Protestant and hence the Eastern Orthodox element has become restless.

At all events, Fiske sees many of these problems as being surmountable if the leadership of the Council continues to be strong. The cluster of early leaders who shared the vision of Archbishop William Temple and others—Niemöller, Mackay, Visser't Hooft, Baillie, Blake—are not without continuous witness, for, as Martin E. Marty has said, [they were] "a generation of leaders who have effectively begun to place on the conscience of Christians the need to see the world through the eyes of other people of other nations, churches, and circumstances." A legacy can be a blessing or a hindrance according to the meaning it conveys and the way in which it is used. Maybe if the World Council selects the right option this will be a prelude to the best hope.

### *Key '73 and the Plight of Evangelism*

"What was heralded as the biggest evangelical drive ever undertaken appears to have failed over-all." With this chilly note, Eleanor Blau began her report (*The New York Times*, September 2, 1973) on the health and status of a movement which had been planned to reclaim the high sights of the religious life of the 1950's and 1960's. "The drive," she writes, "called Key '73, was begun with considerable fanfare eight months ago by more than 140 church groups in the United States and Canada with a goal of confronting every person in the two countries with 'the Gospel of Jesus Christ.'"

With the year 1973 now almost two-thirds over, the story of Key '73 indicates sagging interest and the certainty of failure to meet even modest goals. What happened? There was, of course, the shortage of money. Only one quarter of a \$2-million budget was realized and hence the use of mass media, which was counted upon to placard the program and message before the people of both nations, was sharply curtailed. However, the lack of any visible impact was due not only to restricted financial resources. Reporter Blau reports from the various persons interviewed that the campaign foundered for other reasons also: weak initiative, poor organization, loosely defined goals, and lack of urban orientation. Curiously enough, no one wrote off as dubious the efficacy and viability of mass evangelism in the life style of this new generation. A Houston pastor said, "When you've got the Campus Crusade that gets 150,000 people in Dallas, you can't say that mass evangelism is out."

All, however, is not negative. Those who looked for spectacular results in terms of many and striking conversions are naturally disappointed. But others are heartened by reports of effective steps in co-operative enterprises among people already involved in church activity. For example, "grass-roots co-operation among Protestants of widely differing traditions and some Roman Catholics broke new ground in ecumenism." Instead of the spectacular and in keeping with original plans, "most of the activity was organized locally by individual parishes, denomi-

nations, and interfaith groups. They knocked on doors, distributed Bibles, held rallies or conducted other programs according to their particular styles of evangelism."

Large-scale projects and events, on the other hand, failed to catch on and had to be either abandoned or scaled down. A conference of clergy in the New York area, for example, attracted 1000—one-half of the number expected. A youth rally scheduled for the Felt Forum, Madison Square Garden, failed to excite enthusiasm and the editor of the Key '73 newsletter was led to say, "The whole idea of mass meetings doesn't really go, at least in New York." In Chicago, two attempts at mass rallies were described as "disastrous" and in Detroit one clergyman dubbed Key '73 as a "non-event."

Perhaps the movement of emphasis from the broader spectrum to the local is indicative of the direction evangelism is now taking. Indeed it is at this level that ecumenism is currently most vital. In the Los Angeles area, for example, where the singer, Pat Boone, is co-chairman of Key '73, "an hour-long musical, called 'Come Together,' has been shown on about fifty television stations . . . and another half-hour special has been telecast 667 times over 200 stations; another Boone film is due to appear at Christmas time." In Nebraska, it is reported that "eighty-five per cent of the homes have been visited so far by Key '73 representatives who left copies of *Touched by Fire*, a volume containing two books of the Bible—Luke and Acts." The executive director of Key '73, the Reverend Theodore A. Raedeke, reports that "Denver was completely saturated" with Bibles.

Like any nation-wide enterprise, Key '73 has not been without its critics and detractors, even from the main line churches. Among major denominations, such as the United Presbyterian Church, the Episcopal Church, and the United Church of Christ, there have been officials who "called the drive a public relations gimmick not likely to have lasting effect." Moreover, *The Reporter*, an official newspaper of the United Methodist Church, asked rhetorically in an editorial, "What happened to Key '73?" In most churches, it added, "the drive seems to have produced nothing more than a giant yawn."

### *Desiderata*

Among the souvenirs, bric-a-brac and what-nots of the average gift shop, one encounters usually a collection of wall plaques, medallions, shields and laminated tiles, each presenting in embossed lettering such literary gems and perennials as Kipling's "If," St. Francis' "Make Me An Instrument," or the anonymous "One Solitary Life." Recently a newcomer, "Desiderata," appeared and grew into general popularity as greeting cards, tapestries and beaded cushions reiterated its message. Consisting of a 314-word philosophical poem on peace and love, this little credo augers well to become the most popular bit of wisdom of this decade.

It goes as follows:

"Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the

dull and the ignorant; they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy."

In most instances where this credo has appeared, the copyist has attributed the source to "Inscription on the wall of a church in Baltimore, Maryland, nearly 300 years ago. Author unknown." This is wholly untrue. "Desiderata" was written in 1927 by Max Ehrmann of Terre Haute, Indiana. This fact is staunchly defended by Robert L. Bell, a Boston publisher, who holds the copyright to the rest of Ehrmann's poems. The latter—an author, lecturer, and attorney—received little recognition in his time even by the citizens of Terre Haute where he lived. He called this poem "Desiderata," meaning "things wanted" and hoped to prescribe thereby "how to live with dignity with one's self and with others in a world of turmoil." The poetic essay (what it really is) created no stir in Terre Haute which Ehrmann described as "a smoky, commercial city that has not one bit of bronze or marble for the public eye . . .," but he printed it on countless pieces of cardboard and distributed autographed copies among his friends.

Educated at Harvard Law School, Ehrmann opened an office in Terre Haute, but very soon gave it up and joined his brothers in running an overalls factory where he served as legal counselor and credit manager. However, he loved to write and pursued his craft at night in his three-room apartment. He died in 1945 at the age of seventy-three, with twenty-two books and pamphlets to his credit. "I would rather write," he once said, "one beautiful thing that might abide amid the perpetual flux, even though I lived and died poor, than to be the author of forty commercial novels."

The belated identification of "Desiderata" and its rightful author have brought to light other interesting items of information. Just before his death, the Honorable Adlai E. Stevenson had prepared his Christmas cards and used this quotation on

them, which he identified as "an ancient poem." In the late 1950's, the rector of Old St. Paul's Church in Baltimore included "Desiderata" among some mimeographed literature sent out to his parishioners. He gave Ehrmann credit for it, but inadvertently the year 1692, the date of the church's founding, became confused with the poem; hence the spurious legend, "This beautiful poem was found in a Baltimore church in 1692." Secular magazines have printed and reprinted it; it was set to music by Crane and Werner and won a 1972 Grammy Award for "the best-spoken-word recording." Bell himself reports, "I traced a group of hippies to Taos, New Mexico, where they were printing 'Desiderata' on the walls of a cave." In 1972 a new edition, *The Poems of Max Ehrmann*, appeared and in September his home city, Terre Haute, celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the birth of their native son. Once he had written, "Perhaps even when I am dead, some browser in libraries will come upon me and, seeing that I was not altogether unworthy, will resurrect me from the dust of things forgotten." (Adapted from a tribute to Ehrmann by Fred Covinder, editor of the *Indianapolis Star Magazine*, and a former resident of Terre Haute.)

### *Backstretch Gospel*

The religious page has disappeared from the Saturday edition of many American newspapers. However, those publishers who continue it frequently feature the unusual in the world of contemporary religion, particularly new departures on the part of those clergymen who are in search of more vital and meaningful ministries. The most recent—and certainly the most daring adventure of this kind—was initiated by the Rev. Homer Tricules, former pastor of the First Baptist Church, Long Branch, New Jersey, who decided to resign from his parish and "bring faith to the backstretch tenants of New Jersey's three thoroughbred racing tracks—Monmouth Park, Garden State, and Atlantic City." This move was not easy. "I left my congregation with deep regret," the minister said, "because I had been their pastor for ten years. But the challenge of carrying on my work at the tracks was too appealing. I feel I am entering upon an unusual mission field." Known as Chaplain Tricules at the racing park, he conducts services on Monday evenings on a concrete square near the track's cafeteria. "This is not new," he claims, "at least a dozen tracks across the United States are involved in on-the-site chaplaincy programs. The difference in New Jersey is that the churches and the tracks are co-sponsoring the program by sharing expenses."

Reflecting upon the satisfactions of this new ministry, Chaplain Tricules remarked, "It is particularly heart-warming to be part of a movement ministering to many on whom the church has had only a minimum impact. I know churches frequently are reluctant to receive race track personnel. Now, all comers working at the tracks can worship on their home grounds." An average of forty among this "backstretch fraternity" come out to the services. "In all honesty," says the chaplain, "the turnouts, so far, have been relatively small. It's going to take time for them to grow, but I'm enthused over the potential. Most of those who come have been repeaters, but we are gaining a few new faces every week."



*Procedure in Learning A Hymn*

After forty-six years as organist of the Episcopal Church of the Advent, Birmingham, Alabama, Herbert C. Grieb set down for *The Hymn*, the quarterly journal of The Hymn Society of America (XXIV, 3, 09-71), his approach to introducing a new hymn to a choir and congregation. He realizes there are many approaches which have proved to be successful, but is aware also that no method reaches positive results unless the choir director handles this exercise imaginatively and emphasizes the intellectual, musical, and spiritual benefits the experience can and does afford.

The steps Mr. Grieb outlines are in two stages: first, for the choir; and second, for the congregation:

(i) The music director begins with a short, concise history of the hymn, the writer, and the composer of the tune. He goes on then to present in "simple layman's language" the theology of the hymn and its aim as either praise or thanksgiving or enlistment. Also he may include any interesting anecdote attached to the occasion or circumstances of the original composition of the hymn. All these factors are intended to create interest before the actual singing of the hymn is begun.

(ii) The director asks the choir to follow him in a careful reading of the text. Obscure imagery and phrasing are explained and the necessary "mental emphasis" of certain words accentuated.

(iii) The choir is asked to read the words in unison in order to become fully familiar with them and in view of the director's commentary to be able to encapsulate the whole meaning of each stanza. All these exercises assure the choir's getting "a more complete, more comprehensive picture of what the author had in mind when he wrote the hymn."

(iv) When the choir has become familiar with the thought and purpose of the hymn, the director will then ask the choristers "to follow the melodic line from their hymnals as the accompanist plays the melody only. He may have it played once or twice or as many times as he thinks necessary to co-ordinate the sound of the melody with the notes found in the music. After the melody is well established in the minds of the choristers, the director suggests that the choir hum the melody along with him. He does it again, this time having the accompanist play the complete four-part harmony as the choir still hums the melody in unison. It is now time for the choir to attempt the full four-part harmony, humming as before. If the director, however, detects any inaccuracies, he should call a halt immediately and correct them."

(v) Now it is time to put words and music together. "During the first reading, the director will avoid dynamic effects. He should caution the choir to sing with a steady *mp* tone."

(vi) Last, but very important, "the director will rehearse the choir in the proper expressive treatment of the hymn, placing particular emphasis on interpretation, dynamics, and accents."

Having learned its lesson well, the choir can exercise a leading role in the presentation of the new hymn to the congregation. The choir director and the minister will decide jointly on the most expeditious method and the more appropriate time to achieve what is not always accompanied by openness on the part of many congregations.

(i) There is the "Hymn-of-the-Month" approach. The idea is to use a hymn every Sunday for a full month. On the first Sunday, the hymn is sung by the choir itself, perhaps as an offertory. A paragraph in the Sunday bulletin may be used to inform the congregation regarding "items of interest concerning the hymn." During the rest of the month, the hymn will be used for congregational singing, although it might not be placed always in the same spot in the service.

(ii) In churches where a more informal atmosphere prevails, it may be that on occasion a fifteen-minute pre-service congregational rehearsal of a new hymn could be used.

(iii) It is possible that in some instances the message of the new hymn might provide the central thrust of the minister's sermon and on such occasions the hymn could be sung before or after the sermon. Indeed it is possible to do so at an appropriate juncture within the sermon.

In conclusion, Mr. Grieb warns against the stagnation which overtakes services of worship in which the same familiar hymns occur with unfailing regularity. "Widen your congregation's hymn-singing repertoire," he says to ministers and churches, "do not let hymn singing grow stale for the want of something new."

### *The Professional Instructor*

In a recent issue of *Spectra* (August, 1973), the bi-monthly publication of the Speech Communication Association of America, Edgar Dale of the Faculty of Ohio State University, editorializes on the subject "Excellence in Instruction" (page 4). He begins by indicating how our contemporary concern for higher quality of instruction in our schools and colleges should emerge not from the feeling that we have done a bad job, but from the fact that "modern life requires that the quality of education be sharply improved." Massive changes in the world around us demand an up-dating of our methods in order to match youth's puzzling questions. He cites the case of a five-year-old youngster in a British school who had just heard the old nursery rhyme about the cow that jumped over the moon and who asked promptly, "What about re-entry?"

In our attempts to improve instructional experiences in every field of learning, Professor Dale says that "the modern school or college provides a choice of two general types of instruction: direct, personal, face-to-face instruction and instruction mediated by print, recordings, television, teletape, and pictures. . . . Instruction is no longer time or place-bound. Today's student not only goes to school but the school also goes to him." The key roles of both teacher and student are, therefore, changing. The teacher, for example, does "less direct, group instruction but takes on the role of planner and organizer of learning experiences, stimulator, coach, or gadfly." In this way the teacher "shifts responsibility for learning to the student, helps him to become his own best teacher." This means also that "the modern

teacher is a professional. He knows that if he plans to teach others how to think, he must provide a model of a thinking man . . . one who understands the difference between the *acquiring* and *inquiring* mind." Therefore, the thinking man as teacher does not expect neat and tidy answers to hard questions. "He makes sparks fly in his classroom by encouraging students to rub one good idea against another."

What then are the obligations of the professional instructor?

(i) The professional teacher must commit himself (or herself) to the belief that "all children are *our* children." To quote John Dewey, "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children. Any other idea for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon it destroys democracy." To fulfill this aim will require the best instructional materials, the most competent teachers, the co-operation of understanding parents, and "challenging experiences both in and out of the school."

(ii) The professional teacher will realize that any adequate instructional program must "tap the powerful and underdeveloped potential of the learner." Most students, according to an informal poll, feel challenged, but only a few claim to have been challenged up to 75% of their capacity. Both teachers and parents must be conscious of their capacity to develop the student's potential.

(iii) The professional instructor knows that "motivation to learn is a key goal of all instruction." Too much emphasis upon a "reward versus failure" system of learning must be replaced by the idea of successful academic growth where failure is considered as being merely a temporary interruption for, to quote Professor Dale, "nothing motivates like success."

(iv) The professional instructor will favor adequate and proficient tests for assisting students to discover what they "almost" know. Dr. Dale observes, "We almost know hundreds of words but we do not have adequate instructional plans for moving these words from his twilight zone into sharp focus." This professional skill must be exercised by the teacher in order to enable the student "to bridge this gap between the almost known and the fully known."

### *Religion in the Census*

Americans have resisted with more than ordinary zeal attempts by their government to include any question relating to religious identification in the population census forms printed each decade. Arguments against it range from the need for strict separation of matters of Church and State to the privilege of protecting the privacy of one's own religious conviction. Most of these advantages, however, are somewhat short sighted or indeed spurious. The impression is perpetuated thereby, for example, that ours is a predominantly Christian nation; another is to permit certain religious denominations to protect their inflated membership statistics, because some list their adherents by the number of baptized persons whereas others count up only those who have been confirmed. Interestingly enough, our neighbors to the North, the Canadians, include among the questions of the census taker, "What is your religion?" In 1971, to the surprise of many traditionalists, 928,000 Canadians replied, "None." The significance of this response lay not only in that it was over four per cent of the total population, but it contrasted alarmingly with

a mere 21,155 who gave a similar answer in 1931, actually two-tenths of one per cent then. Moreover, this group ranks fourth largest in the nation. With the large French segment in the Province of Quebec, the Roman Catholic Church records slightly less than half of the population; the United Church of Canada, second with 3,800,000; and the Anglican, third with 2,500,000. In view of the variety of methods and criteria used by religious denominations in tallying up their households statistically, it might be of more than passing interest in this nation of pollsters if the United States were to venture to collate equally useful data.

### *Et tu, Cuba!*

In a recent edition of his syndicated column, Louis Cassels of United Press International, comments on the religious situation in Cuba and particularly the failure of just another dictatorship to stamp out the nerve and fiber of the Christian faith and witness. Cassels comments, "Under persecution, instead of collapsing, the church thrives. Jesus foretold it. Paul and other early Christians experienced it. It has occurred countless times in the 2000 year history of the church. Yet each time it seems a sort of miracle." A contemporary example is found under the regime of Fidel Castro in Cuba.

Cassels shows how the "persecution of Christians seems to be something all new communist dictatorships feel they must try. . . . Cuba is a relative newcomer to the roster and it is still putting some muscle into harassment." Curiously enough, "Castro's anti-church activity is producing the same result as every other persecution since the time of Nero." His first effort was to refuse permission to mission boards in the United States or other countries to send any money or manpower. However, when this was done, as has been reported by the Reverend Bibiano Molina, who retired to Fort Worth after a 50-year ministry in Cuba, "Christian ministers and lay people reacted by supporting themselves." Other tactics in the government's program of harassment include "blocking off both ends of a street whenever a church holds a service. Baseball, soccer, track, and other games are conducted while church is in session. But this does not keep young people from coming. Churches are filled with young people every Sunday." Other means are regulations regarding hours at which services are permitted and restrictions against outdoor preaching of any kind. "It is a miracle," Molina adds, "how church members are stronger than ever in their faith. Churches once dependent are now self-supporting." Moreover, young people "go to church—voluntarily, openly, and stubbornly." Cassels wonders why the evidence from past history of "the paradox of churches thriving under persecution" is a lesson dictators are so slow to learn. "But," he adds, "absolute power has rarely been associated with wisdom in any age."

### *Jesus Christ: Before and After Superstar*

The Danish Culture Minister, Niels Matthiasen, and Pope Paul VI are engaged in a sharp exchange of words. The crisis arose over a financial grant from the Danish government to assist in the production of a new film entitled "The Loves of Jesus Christ." In a sermon on August 26, the Pope spoke out against the film



and since then, minor skirmishes have occurred at Danish embassies in both Rome and Madrid. Matthiasen took to the Danish state radio and fired an intemperate verbal fusillade at the Vatican. "Protests from Protestants," he declared, "affect me much more than Catholic objections, which I consider of no importance at all. In my view, the Catholic Church has throughout history been an enormous reactionary power. What created Franco? What helped Latin American countries to repress the people? It was the Catholic Church which made itself the tool of military juntas and others."

The Pope, nevertheless, in this instance has a point. We have just come through a decade of harassment of the institutionalized church by "far out" persons both within and without its walls. The attack from without has been frontal and clumsy; the interior action, if not a thorough house cleaning, at least re-arranged the furniture. Pope John's *aggiornamento* was overdue and it may be that only the long perspective of time will assess it adequately. In all likelihood there will be greater gain than loss and the majority of the results will be positive. In the wake of this shaking of organized Christianity, however, another operation or process has been subtly at work, namely, the misrepresentation of the person of Christ on stage and screen, all in the name of pop music and art. A case in point is *Jesus Christ Superstar* by Universal pictures. True, the modern Jesus people have been enamored over his person, but Ernest T. Campbell of the Riverside Church, New York City, portrayed them in a recent sermon in this way: "The commandment of Jesus was always COME and GO ("come after me," but also "go" into the diversified areas of life on his costly mission), whereas the Jesus people come but never go." At the other end of things, secular culture, which is neither biblically nor theologically informed in depth, is nourished by popularized accounts of the gospels and caricatures of the person of Jesus (not excluding Westminster's *Human Face of God*, by J.A.T. Robinson) and hence stage and screen take very easily the next step and give us a "ham actor" Christ. Curiously enough, neither Protestant nor Roman Catholic churches in America have ventured a challenge, except for an occasional bleat.

Among the few critical voices raised from a Christian context is an editorial in "News of the New Jersey Council of Churches" (September, 1973). The editor deplores the impression given by the popularity of the film, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, that the religious band-wagon is rolling again in America, whereas in his opinion and that of a Presbyterian educator, Gerald S. Strober, "the film reinforces stereotypes of Jewish people, gives religious grounds for anti-Semitism, and revives the notion that Jews as a group are collectively guilty of the death of Jesus."

Certainly none of us feels the film even pretends to represent with accuracy the story unfolded by the synoptists in the New Testament. All this aside, however, the most disturbing facet of the cinema presentation is the focus of Pope Paul's protest to the Danes, namely, the person of Jesus Christ himself. Moreover, it has taken an underground newspaper, *Rolling Stone* (San Francisco), in its critical review of the film, to point to the faulty characterization of the person of Christ. We quote: "*Jesus Christ Superstar* is intellectually as vacuous as the rock opera it so faithfully follows, visually as barren as the Israeli desert it was photographed in,

and religiously as authentic as Sunday morning services in the White House. . . . Jesus' character is so poorly drawn that we never understand either the appeal that he generates or the hostility he provokes. His greatest show of clout comes when entering a temple overrun with drugs, weapons, whores and other examples of the then rampant depravity. But his most remarkable feat proves to be the mere dislodging of a rack of picture post cards—thus marking him as history's earliest opponent of tourism.

"The sheer triviality of this film is ultimately unsettling. Its makers failed to take the subject seriously, refused to honor their story. . . . I am not a religious person but am glad that I can say, along with Glen Campbell, that 'I knew Jesus before he was a superstar.'"

If the person of Jesus Christ in his own time was no more than Universal's film makes him out to have been, then who should be blamed for doing him in? He was an imposter and deserved it. No one, then, needs to defend or finger the Jews. But, as St. Paul reminds us, "You have not so learned Christ" (Eph. 4:20). For a generation that does not know the New Testament and forms an opinion of the Man of Galilee from a saccharine twirler of theatrics, then Pope Paul VI needs to reiterate his point.

### *What Price High-Rise?*

Sociologists and students of community affairs, whose business it is to diagnose and evaluate the "now," are receiving attention more and more from civic administrators and planners, especially in the field of architecture. No aspect of the urban versus suburban complex is causing more discussion than the high-rise building as an answer to the housing problems of towns and cities in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. In Britain, however, more in-depth studies are being made of the high-rise phenomenon because it has been felt earlier and more seriously over there that this answer to housing shortages has created new problems of its own. Among the major complaints leveled against high-rise architecture are: (i) it leads people to be lonely and isolated; (ii) it contributes to difficulties with neighbors and reduces social contacts with friends; and (iii) it necessitates placing undue restrictions upon children.

Among the more important studies made in Britain one was sponsored by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), an equivalent of the Children's Aid Society in the United States and Canada. This report was based upon research done on high-rise living in general and from a study in particular of 280 families selected at random among variously priced apartments. Although most tenants evaluated favorably the amenities high-rise apartments provided, yet most pointed with concern to those persistent problems that lay elsewhere. Probably the most serious of these problems was loneliness. Fifty-one per cent complained that the physical character of the building reduced chances for friendly encounters with others and increased sources of antipathy and tension. One tenant remarked, "In a house you can open the door and there's always someone around. Here there isn't." Another fault involved the restrictions which were put on children. Two-thirds of the occupants complained that most children

had to remain within the confines of their own apartment until they were five or six years of age. This restriction, moreover, had unhappy corollaries. On account of the noise problem children could engage only in a limited number of activities that ruled out even playing with a ball. Further, since housing regulations set a 740-square foot apartment as standard for a family of four, one tenant commented appropriately, "The small child, beloved as he may be, tends to become less beloved when he has been playing all day within a few feet of his mother."

In 1972 the British journal, *Housing Review*, initiated a survey about housing preferences in European cities and reported the following results: among 1,000 Swedish families, not one wanted to live in a high-rise beyond eight stories; in the Netherlands, the majority preferred a house with a garden; in West Germany, only twenty per cent indicated any interest in apartment living. The general findings of this and other research by the NSPCC were, in summary: high-rise living for families with children "is restrictive, undesirable, and productive of a good deal of human discomfort, if not suffering." The British housing industry countered that the pressure of urban population density made high-rise buildings inevitable and, therefore, "the problems of people living in apartments cannot be answered by not building them." Nevertheless the NSPCC survey has convinced public housing authorities that high-rise buildings are not satisfactory answers to the people's needs. Moreover, recent statistics indicate that while fourteen per cent of the buildings in England and Wales in 1966 were high-rise, in the first half of 1972 the percentage had slipped to 2.5 and low-rise (two to four stories) had risen to 43 per cent. In the Greater London Council it has been said, "There will in future be no very tall buildings of twenty or more stories" and the chairman of Liverpool's housing committee called high-rise buildings "the curse, the worst mistake Liverpool ever made." With this change of policy among housing authorities, there has come a new approach among architects; no longer do they presume to know and to prescribe what is good for people or what makes an ideal environment. A recent architects' journal specified the basic criterion of design currently is "to pay attention to what people want" and this has received favorable reaction not only in schools of architecture but among citizens' groups who are involved in resisting various redevelopment schemes.

### *Whatever Became of Sin?*

In a brochure which has to do with Interpreters' House (Lake Junaluska, N.C.) its director and founder, Carlyle Marney, uses a quotation from a personal letter from Karl Menninger and he includes also a part of his own reply. Menninger wrote (in 1972) as follows:

"I wish I could come and stay at Interpreters' House for a month, even longer. I don't know whether I can ever do it before I die, but I want to. . . . I am more and more interested in what became of sin. Some of it went into the law and some of it went into the clinics and some went into the great fraud, 'group responsibility.' But I think there are still some immoral acts which are none of these things and I think they are in your province (theology) . . . I know you

have pointed out too clearly in one of these essays that I am supposed to be a priest, too, and I want to be, but I feel as if I were only an acolyte and I want to learn . . . *I think they (clergy) are troubled in spirit. I think their morale is low. I do not think they realize what power they have at their command to do the very things they want to do*, to be helpful and inspiring. But I think they must not fear to be reproachful. Jeremiah was not. Isaiah was not. Amos was not. Micah was not and John The Baptist was not . . . this book I am writing is addressed to the clergy. Is that too presumptuous? I want to tell them that we psychiatrists do not know all the answers and it is no good trying to imitate us with or without fees."

Marney replied (in part):

"I am excited by the prospect of your doing a book for ministers. You say they should not fear being reproachful (Jeremiah, et al.)—but Doctor—90% of the clergy we see do not have sufficient sense of 'I' worth, integrity, ego maturity—to say Boo! to a Church mouse, much less a culture.

So we start there—with oftentimes startling effect—calling them to orchestrate their distorted memories of powerful voices into some kind of self-acceptance that will support a bold stance in a culture where we really do have somewhat to be, do, say.

I tell them that Christianly we have more to say to, for, with, on account of, and in behalf of Man than from any other stance we could take: *if* we have done our home-work and if we have enough ego strength to say *I*. By home-work I mean that 30 year process of inquiry—hat in hand—before competent psychology, psychiatry, sociology, history, drama, and art asking these to help us with our notions of *Man*. Such a fellow has much to give out and take in.

With these emphatic paragraphs in mind it has been of more than passing interest to note that *Time* Magazine (August 6, 1973) featured an article on Karl Augustus Menninger, M.D. on the occasion of the appearance of his new and latest book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* (Hawthorn Books). Now an octogenarian, Menninger is associated primarily with the famous Menninger Clinic and the Menninger School of Psychiatry in Topeka, Kansas. His father founded originally the Menninger Diagnostic Clinic where he was joined later by his two illustrious sons, Karl and Will (now deceased). Critics, so *Time* says, accuse the Menningers "of having put psychiatry in too rigid a Freudian framework." But an admirer, such as Harvard's psychiatrist Robert Coles, rejoins: "Karl Menninger has an earthy sense of what is happening to people. In his work there is an encounter between American intuitive psychological wisdom and the European spirit of psychoanalysis, which he made part of the training of a whole generation of psychiatrists." And the noted psychoanalyst Erik Erikson has added: "In his books Menninger translates Freud into American literature. He has not been a popularizer in the cheap sense, but rather an enlightener."



In recent years, Karl Menninger has been occupied as a lecturer, teacher, and consultant, but one of his chief interests and most deeply felt concerns is "preventive psychiatry." No ivory tower theorist, he has set up in Topeka "The Villages," a complex of cottages which house homeless children. Most of these waifs would end up eventually in criminal courts and houses of correction, but, as Menninger said to *Time's* correspondent, "Their only crime is that they exist. In The Villages they live with no guards or attendants. Remember, they are not there for treatment or correction, and most certainly not for punishment, but just to be in a family setting with 'parents' and big brothers and sisters. They learn what it is to be loved and to love, and to co-operate instead of only to hate and fight and steal."

As a Presbyterian elder, Menninger was accustomed as a lad to hear the word "Sin" used to label any breach of the moral law as well as the criminal code. "Recently," reports *Time's* correspondent, "he was struck by the disappearance of the word from the modern man's vocabulary, except for formal prayers. 'Why?' he rasps. 'Doesn't anyone sin any more? Or doesn't anyone believe in sin? Or is nothing now a sin?' Hence his forthcoming book, *Whatever Became of Sin?*"

*Robert James McCracken: Minister of the Gospel*

During the year 1973, America lost through death two of its most distinguished pulpit voices: Theodore A. Ferris and Robert J. McCracken. Ferris (see tribute in THE BULLETIN, LXV, 2, 11-13) left us while still at the zenith of his influence; McCracken had crossed the retirement threshold but continued to be active as an interim preacher and pastor. On Sunday afternoon, March 25, a great congregation gathered at the Riverside Church to celebrate a Service of the Resurrection in memory and honor of Dr. McCracken who had been their minister from 1946 to 1968.

When America's leading preacher, Harry Emerson Fosdick, retired in 1945, not a few prominent names were mentioned as qualifying to be his successor. It was of more than passing interest when a then unknown professor of systematic theology at McMaster University Divinity School, Hamilton, Ontario, was chosen to assume probably the most challenging pulpit in the western world. For the next twenty-two years, Dr. McCracken brought his own distinctive manner and message to the Riverside pulpit and sustained a level of excellence for which the preaching of this church had become widely known.

One of his ministerial colleagues, the Reverend Dr. Eugene Laubach, delivered the tribute to the late senior minister on behalf of the clergy and congregation. He began with an emphasis upon affirmation because Dr. McCracken was known as a man of magnificent faith. "Jim McCracken," he said, "believed, and lived as he believed, in a life beyond this life far more wonderful than anything we could imagine. He looked beyond this world to the next world with faith and confidence that the fellowship begun with God in this dimension of time and space would be fulfilled in a world beyond time and space." Hence a legend grew up around the church which said, "Jim McCracken is at his best on Easter." It was

the time of the year which seemed to dramatize best all he most sincerely believed. "The Easter resurrection experience was the central experience of his life. . . . In the midst of the pressure of living, in times of distress and anxiety, this external dimension was the mainstay of his existence."

A second characteristic, Dr. Laubach named, was "a discipline to which he responded with relish." This was a trademark of the whole program of his ministry, but especially were his study habits influenced and shaped by it. "Jim McCracken," remarked Dr. Laubach, "worked so consistently in the original languages of Scripture (Hebrew and Greek) in the discipline of his reading every morning that he was continually being surprised and refreshed by new insights." Moreover, "it was natural for Jim to have been a teacher of systematic theology. . . . He was a man who loved to wrestle with ideas. For twenty years he shared the results of this scholarship with this congregation in lecture series which covered a wide range of materials and periods. Always, however, there was a central biblical theme to them. He was the church's primary educator, teacher, and theologian, and the range of his thought covered a wide spectrum of concerns."

It was undoubtedly as a preacher, however, that Dr. McCracken's real vocation found its true identification. "He was adept at understanding human needs," said Laubach, "and in bringing to bear upon them the resources of faith. But whatever he was preaching about, he returned again and again to a central theme—one which was a major theme of his own life—the love of God." As he had frequently said, "Penetrate any human soul with the full belief that God loves him and you save him." Indeed the love of God was so real to him personally that he was sure that were people challenged by it they would respond with their best. "He had the amazing capacity to make people feel that he was counting on them, and many of us here can remember times when his trust in us was so complete that we would have done anything to avoid letting him down," Dr. Laubach added.

No eulogy, however, would be complete without mentioning Dr. McCracken's amazing personal integrity. "He had very definite and firm standards of right and wrong. He was gracious but never permissive. He was an effective counselor but never a non-directive one. The faith was too real for him to accept that all options were of equal value. He would be quite frank with you about what his feelings really were and then quite supportive personally as you did what you had to do," declared Dr. Laubach. "He was a man," continued Laubach, "to whom doing the expedient thing came hard. He wanted always to do the *right* thing. . . . Whenever there was pressure to compromise the standards he had set for himself, he would always be pulled back by his fundamental commitment to God."

"We came to know him and respect him and love him," concluded Dr. Laubach. "We were inspired by the steadiness of his faith, warmed by the winsomeness of his charm, challenged by the steadfastness of his integrity. . . . It is easy for us to believe that he lives and has not passed beyond the reach of our love."

D. M.

# A Church Both Evangelical and Ecumenical

## Commencement Address

1973

by EUGENE CARSON BLAKE

**L**AST month when I announced my subject for this address, I thought that I ought to talk to you about the issue that seemed to be central not only in the United Presbyterian Church, but also in the other Protestant churches in the United States. That issue seemed to be that we were all faced with a choice whether to continue to be ecumenical or to turn from our longtime commitment to the ecumenical movement in order to return to our traditional evangelical faith. That, I knew, was a false dilemma and I intended to try to persuade you that to be ecumenical in your ministry you had also to continue to be evangelical in our best Calvinist tradition. That is true in my judgment, but not as central as I had thought before I went as a Commissioner to the General Assembly of The United Presbyterian Church in Omaha earlier this month.

Most of you know that I am just back from that Assembly. Furthermore many of you know also that I was well defeated as a candidate for the office of Moderator. I didn't enjoy that as those of you who know me well would understand.

But what I want to tell you is that the 185th General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church was one of the

*For four decades the name of Eugene Carson Blake has been associated with distinguished churchmanship both in America and abroad. A native of St. Louis, Mo., Dr. Blake is an alumnus of Princeton University and Princeton Theological Seminary. After parishes in New York City, Albany, N.Y., and Pasadena, Calif., he was elected Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in 1951. From 1967 to 1972 he served as General Secretary of the World Council of Churches in Geneva.*

best of the nearly twenty assemblies I have attended; that our representative system is still working well, that it chose for its Moderator an able man whom I love and respect and who stands generally for the positions in the church for which I have been standing for a good many years. But what is much more important, on the major issues this Assembly showed itself to be courageous, to have discrimination, and to have made its decisions on the basis of being *both* ecumenical and evangelical. And even on the contest for Moderator, I am enough of a Calvinist to believe that God was looking out for the church and even for me through the Omaha General Assembly.

I am informed that most of this graduating class in response to God's call are headed towards pastoral service in the church. Most of you will be pastors serving particular churches. I am glad for that and have chosen to speak to you on how to be both ecumenical and evangelical in the pastorate particularly in the Presbyterian Church, although I know some of you belong to other churches, and some of you will teach, or do specialized ministries as you follow your vocation through the years that lie before you.

Forty-one years ago I was sitting in your seat at a Princeton Seminary Commencement. I don't remember what the distinguished speaker said to us, so I don't expect too much this morning. I do, however, remember very well those weeks before the Commencement when I was examined for ordination, and when it seemed to me that I might never receive a call that I felt I could accept with joy.

On April 19, 1932, I was ordained to the Gospel Ministry by the Presbytery of West Jersey. After the service was over a minister who was just then retiring (he seemed to me a very old man) came up to me and after warm words of congratulations said, "I am glad it is you who are beginning your ministry and not me. Things are changing so much, I couldn't face being a pastor now." I was shocked and not a little frightened by what he said. Would it really be as bad as that? It wasn't! I come to you after these years and say, I have had a joyous and fulfilling ministry from the beginning until now. I don't mean to say it was all easy. But I do say it has been a whirl, full of joy, and more "success" than I deserved and more friends and companions in ministry than I had supposed would be possible.

So I speak to you today in the conviction that with all the changes and new problems and crises you will face, there is no calling more free, creative, and rewarding than that which you now begin at your commencement. C. B. Joynt addressed one of the many breakfast meetings that begin so many of the full days at a General Assembly. He was speaking at the "peace breakfast." I quote him. "I have good news this morning for you—. It is the news that

the Christian faith is the most creative dynamic force in history, capable of infinite renewal. It is a message of hope from him who said, 'Be of good cheer for I have overcome the world.' It is the news of a faith which renewed the heart of hopeless, heartless Rome, a faith which converted the Vikings, the terror of Europe for a thousand years. . . . What is this force? It is the spirit of the living God which blows wherever it listeth, a force which enters the lives of men and societies and changes them beyond recognition. It is a living seed which carries the promise of God."

Your task in a church, small or large, is to help the people there and yourself to respond to God in faith and to live by that faith, not that you ever will be certain of success, but that you will have the joy of working with people, young and old, who will struggle with you to be and become a community of the living God. Your joy will be in the living out of your faith with the people entrusted to your care. Some of you will be "successes" even as the world measures success and others will be all the stronger for your disappointments, if corrosive envy or competitive professionalism do not blight your ministry.

Let me then speak to you, out of my years both in the pastorate and in church administration, some very practical insights for your ministry. I suggest the three most important things you must strive and pray for always dependent on the Grace of God.

# I

The first and most important is to *keep your integrity*. You will be tempted all through your years to make the gospel message palatable and agreeable to all your people. You will be tempted



to go along with local customs or traditions which you know are less than Christian. Some of your congregation will not hesitate to make it clear to you that they do not welcome the changes you have been taught in Seminary. The difficulty is that some of your members will not be so outspoken. You will not get direct advice from them; much later you will find that they responded as positively to your leadership as the others who were critical.

I remember very well in my first pastorate I had been preaching for two months. I was young, under thirty. Each Sunday morning my seventy-one-year-old predecessor who had been the pastor there for thirty years sat in the third pew just under the pulpit. He must have suffered with and for me at my awkwardnesses in beginning to learn to conduct worship and to preach. The Sunday before election day arrived. The local government was corrupt. Everyone knew that. And the fact was that some of the pillars of my church and of the community were indirect supporters, by moral compromise, of the corrupt regime. I didn't tell them how to vote nor did I reveal my own intention. Very seldom should a pastor be politically partisan from a pulpit. But I did remind the congregation of our moral responsibility.

After the service one of the elders came up to me and said: "I thank you for your sermon. I have been listening to you carefully each Sunday since you have been here, and I am very glad to know that you will dare to preach in terms that may not be easily accepted by all of us." That was a beginning of my education as a preacher and pastor. Soon I realized that I could not preach or act in a way that would be equally

acceptable to all the congregation. Some were quite liberal and I came from a Seminary which was considered a bastion of conservatism. But there were also Biblical literalists, even doctrinaire pre-millennialists among them too. Some came to church for comfort and blessing, others came for inspiration and learning.

Like you and all people, I wanted to be approved and liked. But it was not long before I learned the fact that it was impossible to please all the members of that or any church.

I was then literally forced into keeping my integrity. Gradually, rather than suddenly, I became a Biblical preacher. On the basis of the scriptures I tried to preach on the big issues and to say what I had been taught or had learned myself to believe to be the word of God to His people.

The problem of preaching once a week to the same congregation is not to find some new thing to say. There aren't more than ten or twenty themes important enough to preach about. The problem is to find fresh ways to tell "the old, old story of Jesus and his love."

Gradually one comes to know the members of his church as individuals. I never called a whole afternoon or evening without being very glad indeed that I had been out calling. Sometimes I was the one who was spiritually helped by the conversation. Sometimes you arrived at a home in crisis and years later you found out that your call had been useful and appreciated.

One of the disturbing statistics over these last years, is the number of men (and women) who have left the pastorate or even the ministry after only a few years. I am convinced that many of these, highly critical of their con-

gregations for pharisaism or hypocrisy have reflected in part their own failure of integrity upon their congregations. No pastor can be happy in his work if he loses his self-respect.

## II

This leads me logically to my second point. If you do keep your own integrity, can you *keep your church*? I want this point to be most practical. 1. Keep your integrity. 2. *Keep your church*, which is to say, don't get fired.

The easy answer to this is that you must love your people. But love is such a big word that it has to be broken up into its parts as St. Paul did in I Corinthians 13 before you understand what it means. Christian love, Agape is not to be confused with human amicability.

It includes respect for people who aren't particularly likeable at least to you. It includes forgiveness for those who hurt, criticize or wrong you. It includes kindness. It includes holding your tongue when it is so easy to cut them down in a discussion or, even more important, to hold your tongue from attacking them when they are not present. It includes giving of yourself to help or serve them even when you are tired or pressed or irritated. You will find if you show love for your congregation, most of them will respond with love for you and your family.

But not if you are arrogant. If you love your congregation, you will try to be persuasive. Some young men are so much impressed with their own theological and Biblical insights that they really enjoy parading their unpopular convictions when they think they are preserving their spiritual integrity. A Christian minister must always care

enough for people so that he tries always to be persuasive. The old-fashioned high pulpit makes this even more important. The task of preaching is an impossible one. How can one appear to be anything but arrogant when the preacher implies even when he doesn't say.

"Thus says the Lord." Even the title "pastor" implies that the people are sheep. The shepherd's crook, designed to keep the sheep from falling off a cliff, can be turned into a symbol of authority. Too often the church has done it.

But the place that most young ministers fail is in their role in the decision making committees of the church, most especially the Session of a Presbyterian congregation. Some pastors ignore the structures and become dictators. Some even succeed at it. Some do not encourage their Sessions to discuss the important issues. But worst of all some are so impatient to get on with the job that they allow the elders to be split down the middle which can be the beginning of a schism in the church and usually is the end of a pastorate. The Presbyterian pastor has great power in his office as Moderator of a Session. It is the Session of a Presbyterian Church presided over by the pastor which ought to make all important policy and policy changes in a congregation.

One cannot be in too much of a hurry. At a formal meeting the Moderator should never be arguing for one side of a debate. Unless one of the elders is willing to take the lead for what you think should be done, your teaching and preaching have not yet been effective enough to make the proposed decision. When the Session is divided,

the Moderator has a great power in refusing to put the question. He can close the meeting with prayer and wait patiently until they are ready for the question. If he listens carefully to both sides of the debate, he may be able to propose an acceptable compromise in the sense that half a loaf is better than no bread at all. Remember only a man of principle can compromise. The unprincipled man, without integrity, can only appease.

Patience is a combination of integrity (to others it may seem to be stubbornness) and a willingness to wait for God's time. Overconfidence and unwillingness to respond and listen to others is the surest way not to keep your church.

### III

But suppose you do *keep your integrity* and *keep your church*, is that enough? I don't believe it is in a world and nation and community which desperately need the good news of Christ. Many pastors have pretty well kept their integrity and stayed on in long and happy pastorates. Under their leadership the church has balanced the budget, even grown in membership, but somehow is only an institution and not a mission. I do not belittle the value of the church as an institution. People are baptized, they receive communion, they worship God, they teach the young from generation to generation. People are married. People are buried. Churches as institutions are useful to their members and even to their communities. But many churches are dead or dying even when the budget is balanced and the roof doesn't leak and the furnace works and the carpets and walls are clean and attractive.

So my final point is that pastors need to *keep the church alive*. A church is not only an institution but it is a movement. The people of God are a pilgrim people on a great adventure with the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night leading them through the deserts of the world.

Is this a romantic impossible dream? No it is not. I have visited a great many churches both small and large during the past twenty years and more, mostly Presbyterian and in this country. Again and again, I have come away encouraged and delighted, most often after visiting a small church whose pastor was a young man whose integrity and wisdom had enabled him to win the support of his elders and people to support a program that made a difference in its whole community. The church was *alive*.

Many years ago I had occasion to look up the word "life" in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*. I have never forgotten the definition and its application to the church. First there was set forth the distinction between the organic and the inorganic as for example in chemistry, that is the difference between a growing plant and a rock. But the interesting definition was within the organic field, that is between healthy life and incipient death. Every living thing is partly controlled by its environment. The environment produces food, water, light, and shade to enable it to grow and flourish. But a *living plant* also makes changes in its environment. It puts down roots into the soil and breaks up the hard clay and even can expand the cracks in stone and enables the soil to hold its life-giving moisture. A living plant produces flowers and seeds which charge carbon dioxide into oxygen so

that animals can breathe and live and multiply. The encyclopaedia made the point that a living plant or animal was alive only so long as it was changing its environment even though the environment was always setting the limits for its continuing life.

An American Presbyterian church is alive when the universal gospel of Jesus Christ so flourishes in its community that that community is affected by it in ways small and large. Love and generosity flow out from it through its general mission giving to the ends of the earth. Forgiveness and reconciliation and honesty and unselfishness can and do affect the life of the local community. Hope and courage are generated in the lives of people.

But never forget that your local church is always affected by the total environment too. At best your church can be only an American Presbyterian church. Your services will be conducted in American English not generally in some universal language of the Kingdom of God. You and your people will read the same American newspapers, and read the same books, and watch the same television programs. You will be a part of American culture, secular and materialistic and hopeless as it is just now. Your church will be as deeply affected as you by the American scene and partly produced and limited by it. Your church will not be perfect and

whole and healthy because few of its members or ministers will even by the grace of God be enabled to transcend your time or place.

But do not forget your faith. God through Jesus Christ founded your church and destined it to be the instrument of salvation for all the peoples and all the nations.

So my word to you is one of hope. You now enter into the full time service of the church. The world, our nation, and our church are being shaken by the present crises. The next forty years may be a greater test of you and your church than were the last four decades. You will face times of deep discouragement with and in the church. But your God will enable you to keep your integrity as a follower of Christ; he will enable you to keep your job, to keep your church, and with your people he and he alone will keep the church alive, preaching and living the good news that is the Word of Salvation for both history and eternity. I envy you just a little that you begin your ministry in and for the church of Jesus Christ in June of 1973.

I repeat, "I have good news for you —. It is the news that the Christian faith is the most creative and dynamic force in history capable of infinite renewal. It is a message of hope from him who said, 'Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world!'"



# Consider the Lilies

by GEORGE S. HENDRY

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THE ecological crisis, of which we have all become so much aware, raises profound questions about the relation of man to the world of nature. They are questions that call for theological answers; but theology today hardly knows how to begin giving those answers. And the reason is simple: theology has given no thought to the questions for a long time. Nature, as a subject for theological consideration, has long since been removed from the agenda of theology. And by the same token, nature plays little or no part in preaching. When last did anyone preach (or hear) a sermon on the text, "Consider the lilies"? The world of nature has largely dropped out of the purview of faith.

Some of the reasons are obvious. One is that nature no longer forms the environment of the average man; it has been replaced by the city. A great change has taken place in the last two centuries. At the time of the Revolutionary War less than 5% of the population of this country lived in cities; today the figure is more than 70%, and it is steadily increasing. The average city-dweller has "lost touch" with nature, in more ways than one. He lives in a world of steel and concrete, re-

mote from the world of nature; and the city is a human artifact which turns him into an artisan, incapable of relating to nature. To modern urbanized man nature has become a reservoir of materials and resources to be exploited in his service by means of science and technology. And if on his vacation he leaves the city and goes out to the country, it is not to seek nature, but to find a different environment for his activities, especially his mobility.

Preaching has to be adapted to this urbanized, activist, technological man. The city in which he spends his active life is the place where his problems arise, and it determines their character—they are social, economic and political. That is where the message of the gospel must be addressed to him. It would be irrelevant to preach to him about the world of nature; for nature occupies a small part on the periphery of his existence.

But now it is being brought home to us that in this area of man's relation to nature there are problems which are fraught with grave consequences for us and which place our continued existence in this world in jeopardy. Has theology anything to say here?

## I

The disappearance of nature from theology and preaching is strange when we consider the place it occupies in the faith of the Bible. Nature, and not only man, is brought under God's creative power and sovereign rule. God is the creator and lord of the heavens and the earth. If God were something less than the God of all creation, if he had nothing to do with the world of nature, if the world of nature were left as some kind of neutral zone outside his rule, faith would be impossible; it would be equivalent to what the Bible calls idolatry, i.e., faith in a divinity which is local, partial and finite. The God of the Bible is universal; i.e., the whole of reality comes under his scope, otherwise he would not be worthy of that total reliance which the Bible calls faith. None of us would deny that. Yet in practice we tend to exclude the world of nature from the scope of faith and thus to deny the universality of God.

Several factors have been influential in bringing this about. The most important, no doubt, is the new understanding of nature which has been acquired by modern science. It was long taken for granted that a theology of nature—or a theological *view* of nature—entailed acceptance of the Biblical *understandings* of nature, especially the ostensible account of origins in the stories of creation. As advancing scientific knowledge made this more and more difficult, faith found itself in a dilemma: either it could assert the veracity of the Biblical understandings of nature in face of all scientific evidence to the contrary, or it could dismiss nature from its purview altogether and concentrate on the relations of God and

man. The latter was the course taken by most theologians following the bitter wars between science and religion in the nineteenth century. And it could be defended as, not a retreat, but a return to the proper theme of theology which had been defined many centuries earlier by Augustine as "God and the soul." Moreover, there is no question that nature is only a secondary theme in the Bible. Even in the creation stories man is placed at the apex (in the first, at the center in the second), and it is God's dealings with man that form the principal theme of the Bible. History is the field in which they take place; for God is first and foremost the God of history, and it is in history that he works out his purpose with man.

But the consequence of this concentration of faith on the God-man relationship was that the world of nature was, to all intents and purposes, written off as outside the scope of faith, and it was handed over to science. The disputes between Genesis and geology are now only of antiquarian interest; if we want to learn about the origin and age of the world, it is to geology we go for the answer, not to Genesis. Faith was saved by retirement to an enclave; and the God of faith was changed into a Baal, i.e., a local deity with a limited jurisdiction. Moreover, the concentration of faith on the saving of souls led to a further abridgment—not merely the world of nature, but the activity of man in that world in the exercise of his God-given "dominion" was excluded from its scope; faith was relegated to the private sphere, and the public was neutralized. It is ironical that there are some people who, in the belief that they are upholding pure orthodoxy, are in fact advocating a reductionist faith.

Another factor which has contributed to the disappearance of nature from the theological and homiletical agenda is the collapse and general repudiation of "natural theology." The traditional view that nature can serve as a second source of knowledge of God (besides revelation) was attacked with special violence by Karl Barth during the days of the Nazi regime, but it had in fact been undermined long before his time. The principal element of natural theology is the proofs of the existence of God, which are based on features of the natural world (such as causality), and these were invalidated by the criticisms of Hume and Kant in the eighteenth century. Moreover, it has come to be recognized that this way of arguing from nature to God has little support in the Bible, if it has any at all. If the famous passage in Romans 1:19f. refers to nature as a source of possible knowledge of God, it is the only one in the Bible, which generally looks at nature in another way. The Bible does not look to nature for light on God, but it looks at nature in the light of God. The most characteristic example of the Biblical way of looking at nature is found in Psalm 19 ("The heavens are telling the glory of God . . ."). The Psalmist is not trying to demonstrate that the world of nature proves the reality of God. As a good Jew he has his knowledge of God through the Law, which he celebrates in the second part of the Psalm ("The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul . . . the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes . . ."). It is when he looks on the world of nature in the light of God's law that he sees the glory of God reflected in it as in a mirror. He stresses the fact that nature is silent ("There is no speech, nor are

there words; their voice is not heard"); but to the ear of faith, instructed by the law, it conveys a silent message.

This way of looking at nature enjoyed a great vogue in the eighteenth century, when the modern study of nature in the "natural sciences" was becoming established. There was no conflict between science and religion; the great scientists were for the most part devout men, and they found in their scientific discoveries in nature illustrations and confirmations of the truth of God of whom they learned in the Bible. Kepler, who discovered the laws of planetary motion, described himself as thinking the thoughts of God after him, and Newton, who was a diligent student of the Bible and wrote a commentary on Revelation, saw the study of natural phenomena as a pale reflection of that immediate and perfect comprehension of all things which God has in his sensory of infinite space. The developments in science excited widespread public interest, and popular piety came more and more to look to nature as the field in which God's power and providence were displayed. Clergymen and educated people read avidly in the new sciences, and preachers expatiated on the new discoveries of the order and regularity of nature as evidences of divine providence. Not only the stars in their courses, but the behavior of all kinds of natural objects, fire, water, minerals, even insects, were pressed into service. Even the baldest statistics yielded fruit for the edification of faith; e.g., the fact that male and female births occur in approximately equal proportions moved a number of writers to praise—and it is a remarkable thing, considering the disparity that is found in individual families.

As the admiration for nature grew, nature threatened to displace the Bible as the source of knowledge of God. If at the beginning of the eighteenth century nature was thought of as providing the pictures which illustrate the words of the Bible, it came to be felt as the century advanced that the pictures were so much better than the words, the latter could be dispensed with. The words had given rise to so much strife and bloodshed, it seemed preferable to seek the light of nature, which shines clearly and calmly and universally.

The substitution received formal expression in Deism. Few Americans today, listening to the reference to "Nature and Nature's God" in the Declaration of Independence, recognize the implied antithesis to the Bible and the Bible's God. And it was not long before nature was substituted for God himself, and a new religion of nature took shape. Its high priests were the Romantic poets of England, the New England Transcendentalists and Walt Whitman. In these nature is celebrated, not merely as an alternative object of worship but also as a source of that healing virtue which the faithful had formerly sought in God; communion with nature was proclaimed as the clue to the recovery of man's wholeness (salvation), which was already being threatened by the growing pressures of industrialization.

It soon became evident, however, that if the world was in fact moving away from the religion of the Bible, it was not moving toward a religion of nature, but toward a new scientific culture based on the study and exploitation of nature. If the religion of nature, as represented by the poets and the Transcendentalists, was a protest against this development, it was powerless to arrest

it, and the threat to human wholeness, which it sought to avert, has grown in intensity. Perry Miller remarks that though the New England Transcendentalists were unique in many ways—not least in their high seriousness—the mood which they expressed is one that recurs periodically in the spiritual life of the Republic.<sup>1</sup> It is present today in sections of the younger generation, and it has been eloquently proclaimed as a model for the future by Charles A. Reich in *The Greening of America*. A feature of Consciousness III, which he announces, is a new appreciation of nature, expressed not merely in a love for outdoor activities, hiking, camping and the like, but in the choice of clothes, the colors of which, "the browns, greens and blues are nature's colors, earth's colors, not the colors of the machine."<sup>2</sup> One of Reich's indictments of the corporate-industrial state, which is the embodiment of Consciousness II, is that it has alienated man from nature; it has resulted in "his loss of the land, of weather, of growing things, and the knowledge of his body that these things give."<sup>3</sup> And this loss is contributory to the loss of self. If man is to recover wholeness, his ties with nature must be restored.

## II

The estrangement of modern urbanized man from nature must be a matter of concern to theology; for it has an effect on man's being as deep and fateful as the absence of an essential vitamin from his diet has on his health. It is a source of "alienation," in the Marx-

<sup>1</sup> *The American Transcendentalists*, 1957, p. x.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 252.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 188.



ist sense of the word; it robs man of something that is necessary to keep him fully human. I will mention and comment briefly on three ways in which this may be seen.

1. The estrangement of man from nature has resulted in a loss of his capacity for reverence and awe. Awe is an essential ingredient of faith in God, but if man's life in the world affords him no occasion for the development of the capacity for awe, faith will become increasingly difficult for him. It is significant that the word "awful" has become a colorless modifier ("awful weather," "awfully nice"). Now nature has always excited awe and wonder in man, when he has been open to it. Indeed, in many primitive religions (and some not so primitive) nature is invested with divine attributes and made into an object of worship. It was such nature-religions that presented the most serious and persistent challenge to the faith of Israel, whose God was the God of history. But though the faith of Israel emphatically rejected the worship of nature, it did not reject the contemplation of nature as a means of elevating the mind to God. Nature was sharply distinguished from God as his creation, but as such it reflected some of his attributes, and thus it pointed beyond itself. Nature served as an elementary school of reverence for what is great and sublime and illimitable, and made it easier for men to make the ascent of faith to God, who is infinite.

Without such a stepping-stone the leap of faith becomes immeasurably more difficult—and doubly so since society can also no longer serve as an aid. There was a time when nature with its vast hierarchy of powers, ranging from the infinitely great to the

infinitely small, served also as a model for the structure of society; the highest dignitaries were accorded honors which bordered on divinity, kings were thought to reign by divine right, and even to this day the mayor of an English town is called "worshipful." But things have changed, since it was discovered that all men are created equal. And if the government of society requires that some persons be placed in high office, we profess to respect the office, but the occupant is usually regarded as a fair target for criticism, ridicule and contempt. The political life of society is hardly a school of reverence.

A restoration of man's relation to nature is essential if he is to learn the rudiments of that reverence and awe, which are ingredients of faith. It need not be a purely aesthetic relation of the kind that is found in so much nature poetry. It can also be scientifically informed; for the natural sciences have largely shed that arrogance and overconfidence which they showed in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and it is not uncommon now to hear eminent scientists express their profound awe for the immensities, the sublimities and the mysteries, which their researches have disclosed. Whether we are scientifically informed or not, the important thing is that we should learn to look at nature, to stand still and contemplate it—and so to become more fully human.

"What is this life if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare?"

No time to stand beneath the boughs  
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,  
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,  
Streams, full of stars, like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,  
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can  
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this, if full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare."

2. The divorce of modern urbanized man from the world of nature deprives him of the capacity for solitude. Why is solitude necessary, if the destiny of man in the purpose of God lies in a community of personal relations, which is symbolized in the kingdom of God (if not in the "secular city")? The answer is that the attainment of that community is not possible unless man succeed in isolating himself from the natural communities into which he is "thrown" from birth and to which his gregarious instinct binds him firmly. The call to repentance, which accompanies the gospel of the kingdom, entails a moment of solitude; for the natural communities, to which man is bound, are all exclusive, and he must sever his ties with them, and be alone, before he can enter the universal community of reconciliation and love. Jesus put the point in harsh terms: "If any one comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters . . . he cannot be my disciple" (Lk. 14:26).

In the world of the Bible it was the role of the wilderness to provide that solitude which is inherent in the transition from the natural to the spiritual. We see it paradigmatically in the history of Israel as it journeys from the house of bondage to the land of promise. The

experience of the wilderness is a necessary element in the preparation of Israel for the proximate fulfillment of its destiny as the people of God; it is there, in the wilderness, that Israel is most effectively isolated and made "holy." We see it more dramatically in the story of Jesus. His first act, following his baptism, was to retire into the wilderness, to wrestle with his vocation—"to be tempted by the devil" (Mt. 4:1). And it was no isolated incident; it became the recurring pattern of his life. We read how on occasion "in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed" (Mk. 1:35). In order to be fully with and for men, he found it necessary to withdraw from them periodically and retire into the solitude which nature provides.

The world of nature provides occasion for solitude, because, in contrast to the world of men, it is a silent world, or, at all events, an inarticulate world. Silence is a rare commodity in life as we experience it today; and what is more significant, with the loss of silence that is a loss of the capacity for silence. More and more people have become dependent on a continuous stream of noise from the radio or the hi-fi, and the young require their newer modes of music to be played at ear-splitting loudness; crowning sacrilege—there are some who violate the silence of the seashore or the forest with the transistor radio.

The loss of the capacity for silence is a symptom of the loss of the capacity for solitude, and that means a loss of the capacity for true human community. For while human community depends on speech, that speech becomes idle chatter if it goes on all the time.

Authentic speech is speech that breaks silence, just as authentic community is formed of people who know how to be alone.

3. The re-introduction of man to nature might pre-dispose him to receive and respond to grace. Nature and grace are a familiar pair in theology; the relation between them is a question that has been much discussed and fought over in the past. But, of course, I am using the word "nature" in a different sense than in the historic controversies, where it was used to refer to human nature. The question then was whether human nature, in its sinful condition, is related to the grace of God positively or negatively. This was a major issue at the Reformation. The Protestants maintained that human nature is so totally corrupted by sin that it stands in sheer antithesis to grace. The Catholics, while not wishing to minimize the effects of sin in dividing nature from grace, were concerned not to push the division to a point that made nature appear somehow to represent a principle opposed to grace. Catholic theology strove to maintain a positive relation between them and to see in nature some kind of premiss, or pre-supposition, or preliminary, or preparation, for grace, and in this it was influenced by the broader connotation of "nature"; for any thought that the "total depravity" which Protestants ascribed to human nature extended also to the natural world was felt to be a libel on God's creation, which Protestants themselves found it impossible to accept. Both Catholics and Protestants clung to the view that some hints, some intimations of grace are available to man in the world of nature, if only his eyes are open to see them.

If it is true, then, that nature can provide an elementary schooling in grace, modern urbanized man, divorced from nature, is deprived of it. The city-dweller of today lives in an environment which is man-made, and by his own contribution to it he helps to build up around him the conception of a man-made world. His world is an artifact, a product of human skill and energy and power, and in these he places his faith and his hope. But it is this world that is breaking down before our eyes, as we approach the point at which man's reckless defiance of nature in the pride of his productive powers begins to threaten his very existence.

We need to learn to look at nature with new eyes. Then nature will introduce us to a realm of powers and energies and generative and healing forces which are other than man's, and which may serve as intimations and anticipations of grace. The fecundity of nature is a basic element in the nature-religions of antiquity, and these, whatever their shortcomings, did have the effect of imparting an aura of grace to man's use of the products of nature, and even to human sexuality. The same may be said of the cult of nature in modern romanticism. A nature totally divorced from grace of any kind becomes an open field for human exploitation, and sexuality becomes profane—compare Walt Whitman's celebration of "the procreant urge of the world" with the sexual behavior of contemporary youth.

The separation of nature from grace is the deepest root of the present ecological crisis. The rapacity of man in ravaging the resources and forces of nature will not be restrained until he learns to look at them, not as commodities to be consumed, but as gifts to

be received with gratitude. We have to learn to look on nature with the eye of faith, or, better, to listen to it with the ear of faith. Nature is silent (as I said before)—but only so far as we are concerned; it is not silent to God. As Abraham Heschel has put it finely: "The Bible does not claim that things speak to man; it only claims that things speak to God. . . . They sing to God . . . each creature has its own hymn of praise with which to extol the Creator. 'All

Thy works praise Thee' (Ps. 145:10). . . . Whose ear has heard the trees sing to God? Has our reason ever thought of calling upon the sun to praise the Lord? And yet, what the ear fails to perceive, what reason fails to conceive the Bible makes clear to our souls. It is a higher truth, to be grasped by the spirit."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *God in Search of Man*, New York, 1955, pp. 96 & 97.

## THE LORD OF THE CHURCH

Theology is in danger of being lost because of this unnecessary polarization of the social and the personal. It is threatened by an emphasis on experience which does not care to reflect on its cause and, in academic circles, by a new influx of the science of the history of religions. At the same time the word theology is applied to every subject in sight with little care about its specific content. We have theology of politics, society, responsibility, work, play, celebration, sex, and if fortunate, of ministry, mission and evangelism. But what is the meaning of the flexible word "theology"? Perhaps the neatest definition of theology was the one Karl Barth gave to a Chicago student who asked him what theology meant. Barth replied that theology was explaining the words, "Jesus loves me." Nevertheless, the confusion and loss of content in the word theology brings us to the heart of the problem of credibility.

Moltmann insists, and I would agree with him, that behind the political and social crisis of the Church lies a Christological crisis—on whom is Christianity really based? The real essence of the Church, he argues, depends not on its ecclesiology (i.e., the organization of the boat's crew), but on its Christology (i.e., who is really the captain of the ship). And, he concludes, whether the Church is believable today depends on the faith which the Church has in Christ. This means that the Church cannot answer the question of its credibility by adapting to present day change as if the gospel were to be found there. If the Church does so adapt, it becomes the victim of the passing moment, ruined by irrelevant relevance. Theological schools which surrender to such adaptation will only produce for the 1980's graduates who are experts in the problems of the 1970's. Instead, the Church and its theological schools must adapt to the One to whom they claim to belong so that they may be free to engage the present without falling victim to it.

It follows that the Church cannot really tell itself that it is alive and well. We can only hear such a word as a Word from the Lord of the Church, a word of the gospel, a word of grace. If we insist on asking the question, "What of the Church: Is it going to survive?", then Luther had the right answer for us, when he wrote, "It is not we who can sustain the Church, nor was it our forefathers, nor will it be our descendants. It was and is and will be the One who says, 'I am with you always, even to the end of the world.'"—James P. Martin (PTS, B.D., 1950; Th.D., 1958) in Inaugural Address, "Exposure and Reflection: Toward First Principles," as Principal of the Vancouver School of Theology, November 21, 1972.



# Kittel among the Coffee Cups

by EUGENE H. PETERSON

EVERY Tuesday from 11:30 to 2:00 o'clock a group of Maryland pastors engages in a disciplined exegesis of scripture as a first step in sermon preparation. Very little is done (usually nothing) regarding actual sermon construction. The focus is on exegesis: a deliberate, sustained effort to read scripture accurately and theologically.

The host pastor puts on a pot of coffee and each brings his own sack lunch. About thirteen men from several denominations participate in the group. The group has been in existence now for ten years. While there is some change in personnel there has been surprisingly little variation in style and purpose. It is something like the woodsman and his axe Thomas Mann wrote about. Sometimes the helve would wear out and he would replace it; sometimes the head would wear out and he would replace it; but it was always the same axe.

Dietrich Ritschl in his excellent book on preaching, *The Theology of Proclamation* (John Knox, 1960), encouraged the use of "co-workers" in sermon preparation. The pastor, he said, should get his elders, deacons, youth, or any interested persons, to meet with him weekly to choose a text and study it together. Their questions, needs and insights would shape the course of exposition. With that kind of preparation the sermon would not be just the preacher

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speaking to the people; the split between clergy and laity would be healed and the sermon be much more an act of the people of God (pastor *and* people) in worship. His thesis was that "the whole church is called to participate in the office of proclamation which is held by Jesus Christ alone . . ." (p. 7). Ritschl, though, did not intend that such a group should constitute the whole of sermon preparation. He identified something more basic: "The primary task is a rediscovery of exegesis . . . exegesis is the preacher's weekly work, or else he is not a faithful minister" (p. 182).

What Ritschl failed to suggest was the use of co-workers in exegesis, the act he identified as "the primary task." It may have been sheer coincidence, for none of the Maryland pastors had read the book at the time, but they were during this same period (the 1960's) developing a "co-worker" approach to the task of exegesis by meeting together weekly and learning how to assist and challenge one another in the exegetical task. Convinced that solid exegesis is necessary, and realizing that they were not doing it on their own, they developed a supportive fellowship to carry it out.

## I

A lectionary is used as a basis for the selection of texts. The lections are varied seasonally: Gospel lessons are used in

Epiphany and Lent; Epistle lessons in Eastertide; Old Testament lessons in Pentecost; Gospel lessons in Advent and Christmastide; Epistle lessons in Epiphany and Lent; etc.

Each participant in the group assumes leadership in turn. The entire group does preparatory work, but the leader is expected to have worked harder than the rest. He analyzes the passage, does word studies, reviews the history of interpretation of the passage, offers exegetical comments, moving then to possibilities for exposition in the context of congregational needs. The text is explored and debated. The mix of mind provided by the group turns up quantities of exegetical material—some relevant and some irrelevant—accessible for the later work of exposition.

When the group disperses about two o'clock there are still five days left to put the exegetical work of the group to use in personal sermon preparation.

I once asked the members of the group why they came so faithfully, for there is a high degree of consistency in attendance. Surprisingly, all the responses mentioned something other than the exegetical work. Yet exegesis is the purpose around which the group is structured. They mentioned personal support, a sense of being part of a professional community, the congeniality of an accepting group which also had integrity so that it was possible to share both personal and parish problems in confidence.

The group does move, with fair frequency, from exegesis to a kind of informal support therapy. A pastor may show up full of anger about something involving his church leadership and break up a close exegetical analysis with something quite irrelevant to the dis-

cussion. The group easily drops its exegetical work for the next thirty or forty minutes in order to deal with the emotions. Or a pastor suffers personal loss in his own family and finds colleagues who are a pastor to him. There is a mixture of professional and personal investment that quite consistently pays off.

## II

Still, all agreed that it would not be wise to drop the rigorous concentration on biblical exegesis. An illustration was offered: six persons take a trip in an automobile to a destination, say, a thousand miles away. The purpose of the trip is to arrive at the destination. But during the trip they are pleasantly surprised to find some companions in the car who are delightful conversationalists. The highway is through countryside packed with natural beauty and they find that they are fortunate to have drivers who are not so obsessed with the "goal" that they can't stop and look at an occasional meadow or mountain. All the time the trip is in progress the six are both enjoying the scenery and the persons with whom they are traveling. After arriving at the destination there is an interview in which each of the six is asked what was the most important part of the trip. One would mention a jutting mountain peak, another some flowers that were unusually colorful, another the stimulating conversations of his companions. It would be understandable if no one would answer the question by saying simply and obviously, "getting here was the most important part." Personal impressions and experiences would appear to be the most rewarding aspects of the journey. And yet if they had never arrived at

their destination there would be a good bit of irritation and grumbling about the futility of the whole thing. And no one would be likely to repeat it.

The illustration is appropriate to the group: biblical exegesis is, in fact, the destination of the group and everyone takes it seriously. Each is part of the group for that reason. Each takes a turn at the responsibility of being "driver" and makes sure the destination is finally achieved. But that doesn't mean that the car isn't stopped for a few minutes if somebody wants to get out and look around.

Interestingly, the group does not assimilate new members easily. Or, to continue the previous illustration, hitchhikers have a hard time. While there is a surface courtesy extended to the visitor, those who have weathered the entrance rites have noted that it takes several months before they feel at home. Much of this can be explained in terms of strong in-group dynamics. But some of the reason is because the newcomer has a difficult time believing that these men are all that serious about *exegesis*. As a "hitchhiker" he doesn't come in sharing the same goal commitment. His expectations are at the level of Rotarian bonhomie, support therapy, or "getting sermon ideas." It takes a while to adjust to serious exegesis and many, not feeling such a need or sharing such a purpose, quietly drop out.

The effectiveness and cohesiveness of the group result from a common concept of pastoral ministry which takes preaching seriously, knows that good exegesis is necessary for it, and accepts the need of peers for discipline and motivation. The pastor is put into a position where he is most visible to most people when he is in the pulpit during

the Sunday morning hour of worship. And yet there is very little in either the life of the congregation or the life of the culture to affirm him in the conviction that preaching is, in fact, central to what he is doing, and a great deal to tell him that it is trivial. A group of peers who take seriously the goal of preaching and the disciplines required to make it strong, over the long haul builds up a reservoir of affirmation.

### III

The group has demonstrated that preaching requires community at both ends, in its exegesis and exposition. In exposition the need for a community is self-evident. A solitary preacher in the act of preaching is an absurdity—listeners are a presupposition for preaching. But if a congregation is necessary for exposition a community is no less necessary for exegesis. For as long as there were Christian presuppositions in society, a kind of consensus among the people that preaching was central, there was no problem. As he did his exegetical work in preparing his sermon the pastor felt supported by the expectations of the people. They nurtured his exegetical work by their assumptions. The culture was on the side of the exegete. Today's pastor doesn't have that support. He may have a large congregation to preach to on Sunday, but he has no community support during the week challenging him to think, pray, and prepare for the act of preaching. The world is activist and the culture is secular. The presuppositions of the people are inconsiderate of the exegetical work that makes preaching viable.

A series of articles in a contemporary theological journal was entitled "From Text to Sermon." Several preachers de-

scribe the process they go through in making a sermon. In each case the work of exegesis is arduous, exacting, and indispensable. It is remarkable, though, that not one of them refers to any kind of community as he describes his exegetical work. The work of sermon preparation is conceived in each instance as an individual task—the solitary preacher laboring in his study. But that kind of exegetical work, involving skill with the biblical languages, an acquaintance with the theologians, and the patience to follow sound hermeneutical procedures is not likely to take place with parish pastors week by week, year in and year out, working by themselves. It does, though, take place among the pastors described here who meet every week with a cup of coffee in one hand and Kittel in the other.

There were in Israel during the times when Yahwism was threatened with extinction groups of men called *b'ne hanabim* ("sons of the prophets"). We

encounter them at several places in the southern part of the kingdom of Israel in the ninth and tenth centuries. We don't know exactly what they did; we do know that they provided a *milieu* out of which prophecy could be expressed, communities which made it possible for the office of prophet to be sustained among God's people.

Biblical preaching is under a similar threat today. The preacher rides no wave of enthusiastic expectation in his preaching. Exegesis, the basic requirement for biblical preaching, is not encouraged. But just because the culture doesn't provide a friendly *milieu* for the hard exegetical work behind preaching is no reason for the pastor to do without it. He can create one for himself simply by inviting some colleagues to lunch. For the cost of a pound of coffee he can create a school of exegesis that will feed his self-esteem, encourage his vocation, and provide fresh insights into the most hackneyed text.



# The Leap of Faith and the Transitions of Life

by WAYNE E. OATES

*An alumnus of Wake Forest College and of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Wayne E. Oates continued graduate studies at Union Theological Seminary, New York. For twenty-five years he has been Professor of the Psychology of Religion at Louisville. He is the author of many articles, reviews, and of six books, including New Dimensions of Pastoral Care (Westminster, 1969). This lecture was delivered on November 12, 1972, at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City.*

[The Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church established this lectureship in order to honor the Reverend Dr. John Sutherland Bonnell whose important work in this field is well known. Outstanding psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors and pastors are invited to present these lectures annually before the academic, medical and theological communities of New York City.]

I AM honored by this church in your asking me a second time to deliver the lecture established in appreciation for Dr. John Sutherland Bonnell. His books on pastoral psychology were among the very first I read as I began to prepare for a lifework of intensive care of souls in the modern sense of that set of words. I received several impressions from his work that have remained with me as personal convictions until this day. First, I learned from him that the minister cannot afford to be timid about exercising his or her charisma. He or she has the gift of having been ordained by God to speak with God on behalf of hurting people who are flayed and cast down, like sheep without a shepherd. If he or she shrinks from the free exercise of his or her call, the central reality of distinctly pastoral counseling is then missed. I also learned from Dr. Bonnell that the message of the Old and New Testaments, when understood thoroughly by a minister, is an indispensable instrument in

the healing of broken-hearted and sin-laden persons. Furthermore, as I read Dr. Bonnell's books, and as I listened to his preaching Sunday after Sunday during a sabbatical in New York in 1952, I learned the meaning and power of pastoral prayer. When I heard him pray, I felt that God was very near. God did indeed respond to this godly man's petitions in behalf of us who listened. Life was different and better after this man prayed. Therefore, I am not only honored by the privilege of being here today; I am humbled. And those who know me best know that it takes a lot to humble me!

## *The Courage to Leap*

My topic today is: "The Leap of Faith and the Transitions of Life."

We are indebted to Søren Kierkegaard for the challenging thought that the life of faith consists of having the courage to leap forward into the unknown. At the cutting edge of life's growth decisions must be made with

the assurance that God both calls us to do so and sustains us when we do take the leap of faith. Paul Tillich later called this the "courage to be," to accept God's acceptance when we know that we are unacceptable to ourselves. Lewis Sherrill identified the leap of faith with the wisdom of Hebrews 10:3 in which the writer says that the righteous shall live by faith in contrast with the person who shrinks back in fear from the inherent demands of life. The kind of religion that emerges in the first place is a religion of adventure and faith. The kind of religion that emerges in the second instance is a religion of nostalgia for the past, sentimentality, and inner despair. Paul Tournier in his book, *A Place For You*, has most recently depicted the leap of faith by saying that we live in a rhythm of life between quitting one place in life and seeking another. He uses the analogy of a trapeze artist swinging on one bar to the utmost distance that it will take him and then turning loose and reaching hopefully and courageously for another bar. The breathless suspense in the "mid-air placelessness" is the anxiety of faith. One's breath and that of all who observe is held until the transition has been safely made, a transition that could never have been made if the person had not the courage to take "the leap."

The Biblical hero of faith who portrays the leap of faith in his power of decision was Abraham. The Scripture says: "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. . . . For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose

builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:8,10).

Contemporary pastoral psychology, with the help of developmental psychologists, has identified this life of faith with the common transitions of life through which the average person inevitably must go. A transition is not necessarily a negative experience. Nor is it always a bonny, happy experience. It has either potential, and is ordinarily an ambiguous mixture of both. Robert Havinghurst called these times in life "teachable moments" when a person is presented with the challenge of a "developmental task." If he moves at this task in keeping with its timing and does not avoid it, delay it, or refuse to face it, then he is invigorated with fresh skills for meeting later such developmental tasks with courage, abandon, and more skill. If he refuses to face the demands of the developmental task, works at it half-heartedly, or completely fails in the task, then he is ill prepared to face later developmental tasks.

### *Life Support System*

Gerald Caplan, writing concerning the principles of preventive psychiatry, calls attention to the ways in which the surrounding community of a person either provides a life support system to sustain a person in times of crisis or it does not. If it does not, the person is predisposed to emotional disorders. If psychosocial supplies are supplied in the right amounts, the person is predisposed to health. He makes careful note that persons may as easily be oversatiated with support at these times as they can be undersupplied and deprived. One would comment that such oversupply is just as easy, but does not occur nearly as often.

When one puts these two ideas of developmental tasks and a life support system at the time of the "teachable moment" together in the context of the faith community of Christians, some interesting results occur. From birth to death individuals and families face one transition after another. It takes a robust faith to encounter one transition at a time, and no one can go through these experiences for us. Each person has to bear his or her own burdens. If sentimentally helpful people try too hard, they misrepresent reality by trying to go through the crisis for us rather than with us. If they neglect us and leave us alone with our burden, we have the added stress of isolation, loneliness, and the absence of the support of a faith community. Therefore, in the community of those who believe in Christ, we bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Another behavioral scientist, Arnold Van Gennep, gives us glimpses into the ways in which communities actually do provide the kind of support really needed in times of transition. He says that we do this for each other through the media of what he calls "rites of passage." These rites are ceremonies which have become habitual ways of recognizing, interpreting, and relating to the great critical moments in people's lives. They remind a person that he is not the only person who has ever faced a situation like his own. They demonstrate to a person that he is a part of a large company of people who are aware of his distress or joy, despair or celebration, loss or achievement, etc. Furthermore, these rites of passage give the whole community at one and the same time an opportunity to symbolize in actions their devotion, care, and commitment.

Thus they offset the possibility that the support given the person on an individual basis will oversatiate him or her to the point that he or she is either revolted or pampered by the individual attention of too many people. For example, the sick person can be damaged by too much attention during the post-operative period and not enough care during convalescence at home.

Gennep tells us that there are three types of rites of passage: rites of separation, rites of transition, and rites of reincorporation or reunion. These can be illustrated in the lives of persons making the transition from the single life to marriage. The engagement and its rituals is a rite of separation of the person from the ranks of those who are single during which the decision to marry is tested. Hopefully during the engagement the community as a whole has an opportunity to express its criticism, confrontation, its comradeship to the couple in their decision. The wedding and honeymoon are the public and private rituals of transition in which a couple actually "takes the leap of faith" not only in each other but in God. The wedding as an act of worship is the community's way of interpreting this developmental task as an act of faith, hope, and love. The couple actually does go out not knowing what the future holds. They do so with the sustenance, support, and blessing of the community of faith. However, the third rite of passage, the rite of reincorporation into the community in a new station in life as married persons is one which the Christian community has provided little or no interpretative, supportive, and confrontational rituals for young married couples. In our more rural days, the community as a whole

would have a "house warming" and a "pounding" for young couples as they set up housekeeping. Each person would bring a pound of this or that staple food product as a tangible expression of spiritual nourishment and blessing at this time. Such rites of re-incorporation of a couple into the community, quaint as they are, nevertheless provided the kind of community validation of the wisdom of their decision and the commitment of the community to help them stick with their decision. However, in the highly urbanized isolation of cities today, there are few if any rites of passage of this kind for the neo-married. They fend for themselves, sink or swim, and often sink.

By now you are beginning to see, I hope, that faith is not merely a private soliloquy with God, nor is it a kind of individual spiritual athleticism in which a person demonstrates that he or she can get along without all people quite well. Rather faith is individual courage to leap into the unknown, supported and sustained by a community of faith. In psychotherapy and in pastoral psychology alike, a twin emphasis in today's practice demonstrates this. First, the individual is confronted with the challenge of taking the necessary leaps of faith and trust that will assure his or her own growth in the realization of the highest of his or her potential. Second, increasingly the form of therapy is a combination of individual counseling, conjoint counseling with couples and families, and group counseling with companies of seekers after a larger and less constricted spiritual territory. This is what Howard Clinebell calls "the people dynamic," by which he means experimentation and adven-

ture in growth and in trusting awareness in relation to a faith community.

From a theological point of view, one could say that we are somewhat inadvertently rediscovering the meaning of the individual's decisive leap of faith. Even more than that, we are also rediscovering the context of the great cloud of witnesses both past and present who surround us in a fellowship of basic trust and faith. Tournier's figure of speech of the trapeze artist is not that of a person in a huge, empty, meaningless tent "doing his thing" in the leap of faith. A person has a breathless, anticipatory audience of people who have gathered together to cheer him or her on his or her way. In essence, we are reappraising the doctrine of the church as something more than an institutional vested interest or the treasure-house of doctrines, that are in themselves precious. The church is an organism of participation whose members provide context, meaning, and fellowship in the individual, family, and cultural transitions that must unavoidably be faced.

### *Times of Specific Transition*

From an operational point of view, you have a right to ask me to be more specific about the times of transition of life to which I have repeatedly referred. What are these crises and when do the "teachable moments" tend to appear most often in the course of persons' lives? Someone has said that the average person's life has to be reorganized about ten times: (1) when one enters school, (2) when one reaches puberty, (3) when one completes school, (4) when one chooses a mate, (5) when one enters a full-time job, (6) when one becomes a parent, (7) when one's sons and



daughters all finally leave the home, (8) when one loses someone by death, (9) when one retires, (10) when one becomes permanently disabled and/or faces a terminal illness.

These times of testing—referred to in classical literature as temptations in the wilderness—tend to happen to everyone either in terms of their own personal existence, in terms of the existence of their parents, or both. They can be called developmental crises. Nor do these transitions present themselves to an individual in isolation. In all instances, they involve both the demand and response of his or her family, his or her faith community, and his or her cultural milieu. The great sacraments of the liturgical churches tend to be beamed upon these transitions surrounding them with pageantry and interpretation in most, but not all, instances. I say not all instances, because a common venture of most people today is that of retirement, a relatively recent invention of our culture. Little or no spiritual interpretation, comradeship, or pageantry is provided the retiring person by the fellowship of faith, whether that fellowship be liturgical or non-liturgical. Little wonder is it that the faith of many after retirement is replaced by disgust and despair.

These overall, total reorganizations of one's life tend to make people's hearts sink within them with anticipatory anxiety. Each of them is a time when separation anxiety is very present, and one is called upon, as Abraham was, to leave the dear bonds of the past. These bonds are ties to people—father, mother, brother, sister, children, work associates, etc.

Prophetic faith presents us with the alternative of taking these household

gods with us, hidden in our travel gear, simply staying by them until they die, or taking up our cross, leaving them at this level of faith, and following after the Lord Jesus Christ into a larger family of mankind. Sigmund Freud, in his "Case of an Infantile Neurosis," almost casually gave a dynamic interpretation of the positive function of religious faith in the life of the growing person. He said that such a faith either does or should (1) lower the importance of earthly families, (2) give one a secure ethical mooring for his or her aggressive and sexual impulses, and (3) provide access for them to the larger family of mankind. Such a lowering, giving, and providing by a community of faith, however, must be actively appropriated. Freud assumes an initiative of faith on the part of the individual in which he or she takes the leap of faith in leaving one's earthly family—as Jesus enjoined us to do. He or she internally affirms the validity of a personal ethic rather than suspiciously looking upon it as an unreasonable set of restrictions. And, he or she actively searches for a "city" or a "community of faith" that knows no boundaries of race, sex, creed, or social class consciousness. But such faith cannot be assumed. It takes place upon exercised initiative and positive decision by a person. Prophetic faith underscores our temptations to idolatry at these times—the idolatry of the gods of the heartplace or family, of the market-place or economic security, of petty power or the temple and government, and of our own need to replace God. In short, we are tempted to worship our families, to idolize material success, and to live self-absorbed and self-adoring lives. Such temptations are fraught with anxiety and we struggle



not against flesh and blood at these times but against principalities and powers of darkness. Luther called this struggle of the soul *anfechtung*, a sort of anxious dread at the impending necessity of faith. Faith was a sort of tearing up of the nest and an optionless, no-return testing of one's wings in flight. Both from a psychological and theological point of view, it seems to me, this is a creative interpretation of the leap of faith in the face of transition.

However, a further probing of the meaning of transition is necessary. Many people experience these crises somewhat reactively rather than actively. They are single persons. They have for one reason or another not gotten on the escalator of the family development cycle. They experience the ten crises of reorganization I have mentioned, but not in the same way. For example, they may have, with full exercise of faith, leaped from the security of home out on their own. Yet, they, more than their married siblings, experience reactively the effect that all children leaving home has had upon their parents. Tacitly or openly they are somewhat "blackmailed" by their siblings to return to their particular Ur of Chaldees and look after father and mother. They, in turn, experience a kind of loneliness in the exercise of faith that other people do not. Their extra measure of freedom and autonomy in taking leaps of faith into the unknown is often envied by their married confreres. Single persons have a heavier burden of vocational calling upon them than do persons who are married and have children. They can and are called upon to do kinds of work that are subtly off-limits for parents of children. For example, my teacher, Anton Boisen, lived his ninety years

as a bachelor. He became a chaplain of mental hospitals when he had to live on the same hall and eat in the same dining room with the patients. This intrepid explorer of the inner world and the wilderness of the lost seemingly had a heavier claim for the leap of faith made upon him than has been made upon some of us whose way he, like John Sutherland Bonnell, made easier and clearer.

### *Bleak Times of Transition*

Furthermore, an even deeper probing of the nature of transitions which call for the leap of faith is needed. Not all transitions are as universal as the ten developmental crises I have already named. There are additional ones that some people face that others do not. These might be called, for the lack of a better name, atypical or emergency transitions. A list of the more common ones can be named: (1) *The transition of sudden and unusual success*. For example, the mother of Neil Armstrong, the astronaut, and the members of the families of all the astronauts, experienced a total reorganization of their lives by reason of the extraordinary events in their sons' lives as moon explorers. The old play, "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?" pithily puts this crisis of faith. Such persons are indeed propelled into a whole new realm of being. (2) *The crisis of entering the military, and especially going into combat*. In the Vietnam war, not all persons and their families have been directly involved in this crisis. One might say that the country is divided between that minority who actually went into combat and either survived or did not survive and those who continued to enjoy the luxuries of a nation at war but not

really at war, either. I felt the agony of this as a parent myself with a son in the fiercest part of the combat as a gunner on a river assault boat in the Mekong Delta in 1968-69. I also absorbed a little of the stress of military chaplains at nearby Fort Knox as they went into a five state area notifying the next of kin that their son was KIA, MIA, or a POW . . . killed in action, missing in action, or a prisoner of war.

(3) *The Transition of divorce.* Not all persons experience this, divorce, only about a third or fourth of the married persons in this country. Yet this is a kind of grief for which flowers are not ordered for the bereaved, a kind of loneliness that is not surrounded by crowds of friends and loved ones offering condolences and support. Yet the issues of idolatry of the past or a leap of faith into the unknown shoals of the future are still more acute than if they had lost someone by death. (4) *Imprisonment.* Similarly, the tragedy of someone being separated from the "dear bonds of the past" by a traumatic shift in their legal status from that of a law-abiding citizen to that of a convicted and imprisoned criminal tends to make or break human personalities. The rites of passage for prisoners who have served their terms and are leaving prison simply do not exist as far as the community of faith of the church is concerned. The interpretation of this crisis as having anything in common with Jeremiah, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul, Stephen, the first Christian martyr, Savonarola, John Bunyan, Roger Williams, or Martin Luther King, all of whom "served time," seems strangely remote and ambiguous to anyone except those few devout Christians who have survived such an ordeal. The closer

one gets to the contemporary scene the harder it is to see that in some instances, at least, the act of faith of a person actually got him or her into prison. In all instances, the return to the neighborhood, the streets, the place of work, and—even more difficult—to church calls for a leap of faith in oneself, in others, and in God. There are many who crash from their trapezes to the ground below before the watching eyes of the populace. Do we say: "I expected as much. A leopard cannot change its spots"? If so, then are we a faith community or an operation in respectability? We bet easily on horses, but only rarely on people in their leap of faith.

(5) *A mental breakdown.* Anton Boisen, who himself had three severe psychotic episodes, described his journey into madness as a pilgrimage of faith in which he struggled manfully with the forces of sin and salvation, despair and hope. Today people do not fear a burning hell nor equip themselves with asbestos suits on their pilgrimages of faith. They have transferred this same fear, nevertheless, to the fear of "losing their minds," "going to pieces," or "going berserk" and doing something they fear they will do. Much of the emotional charge we previously invested in the fear of hell, we now impute to mental illness. This is a crisis through which enough people go to fill half the beds of the hospitals of this country. Those beds are still predominantly in the kinds of hospitals that not even doctors in great numbers frequent. They are filled with patients whose symptoms both defy and therefore bore the majority of physicians in this country. The upsurge of psychiatry as a medical specialty has had a double effect: It has provided a modestly larger number of

doctors who do take the illnesses of mentally disturbed persons more seriously. However, it has also provided a "referral out" or a "psychiatric out" for both the religious community in its care of these persons and for a large segment of the medical profession, many of whom disparage not only the patient but the specialist who treats them. The re-interpretation of mental illness that is gaining momentum today suggests that these illnesses, particularly the functional disorders, are crises of faith in which a person either "hangs in there" with coping with reality or withdraws from the struggle of the soul and builds a "world of his own." Mental illness is a struggle between fantasy and reality, distortion and clarity of perception, despair and hope. Mental illness is in deed and fact a struggle with the question of what kind of universe I am going to live in—one in which God is God and I by faith in God deal with the world as it is, or one in which *I* am a god and the world is one that I create and therefore can seem to control all that I survey. Yet I cannot face this crisis alone, either. There must be a milieu of faith, even if it is a minority of ten or twelve of the large ecclesiastical behemoths of the land. I am saved from destruction by the remnant of a faith community.

Other such atypical but prevalent transitions could be named, but these suffice to describe the little unairconditioned corners of the south end of hell through which considerable numbers of the people we are and those we serve

are called upon to exercise the leap of faith.

### *Faith in the Arena*

In summary, let me say that the leap of faith in the face of transition moves religious experience out of the stuffy academics of life into the arena where people live, love, suffer, die, and are resurrected to a new life. Karl Barth has said that these crises are not *necessarily* crises of religious import. The shaping existence of the Incarnate Word of God in the fellowship of faith transforms them from feelingless events into faith events. That is our job. The community of faith is called by its nature in relation to God to provide life support systems and mission control stations to guide people through these transitions. We are called, as Joseph said he was, to suffer the pits of adversity and the prisons of misunderstanding ourselves in order that we may go ahead of the rest of society in order to save "much people." As a church, then, we are called to the kind of faith of which Minnie Louise Haskins in her only poem wrote:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown!"

And he replied: "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

# For Us Men and Our Salvation

Sermon by DOUGLAS WEBSTER

*No missionary voice enjoys higher respect in Britain than the Rev. Canon Douglas Webster, Precentor and Canon Residentiary of St. Paul's Cathedral, London. Author of several books, including Yes to Mission (SCM, 1966), Dr. Webster has served as Theologian-Minister of the Church Missionary Society. We print here his sermon before the Society during its annual meeting in 1972.*

"He saved others; himself he cannot save." Mark 15:31

"There is no salvation in anyone else at all." Acts 4:12, NEB

MANY a true word is spoken in jest. Jesus was a constant subject of jests, particularly during his Passion. Caiaphas jested; Pilate jested; the soldiers jested; the crowd jested. But the most cruel of all jests conveyed the most profound of all truths, as divine wisdom was clothed in human wit: "He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." But he who came down from heaven, for us men and for our salvation, as the Nicene Creed daringly asserts, did not come down from the Cross. By refusing to save himself he became the Savior of the world. The world has seen the wit but not the wisdom and has not yet believed. Hence the unfinished missionary task.

That task is made harder by the very conviction which makes it necessary, a conviction which affronted the world in the first Christian century just as much as in the last third of the 20th century. Standing before the Jewish Council and "filled with the Holy Spirit," being questioned about making a lame man walk, Peter put it into ringing words: "There is no salvation in anyone else at all, for there is no other name under heaven granted to men, by which we

may receive salvation" (NEB). That conviction ever since has been the main stumbling-block of the Christian Gospel and the main motive for the Christian mission.

Here then are two texts to introduce this "salvation" theme which will occupy the Conference of the Commission of World Mission and Evangelism and which the Church Missionary Society has proposed for this annual sermon. The one text was a taunt to the dying Christ, the other an affirmation of the infant Church. The taunt was made by religious people about a man and a death they did not understand. The affirmation was made to those same religious people and their successors about that same man by one of his followers who had just begun to grasp something of the meaning of his death. But they still showed little inclination to understand. That being the case let us admit that the sharing of this truth with secular man is likely to be a far from easy enterprise. It is a common mistake to oversimplify evangelism. We may well be asked in the words of the hymn, "Tell me the story simply," and we must try to do this; but the story itself is not simple and the salvation *motif* which is at its heart is fraught on all



sides with potential misunderstanding. We must reckon therefore that this is a complex theme.

There are reasons for this. First, there is the word itself. No longer is "salvation" a word in constant use in everyday speech. The dictionary makes it clear that its primary meaning today is religious. Religious usage has largely monopolized the word, though it is sometimes given a secular sense such as preservation from loss or calamity. But in the Bible it was a current word in daily use in both the Old and New Testaments. It could have religious overtones and in the New Testament it certainly has, but basically it was a secular word. Its nearest modern equivalents are safety and security.

Secondly, because of the way it has been used in some Christian circles the word has acquired, quite wrongly, a selfish connotation. To many an outsider it seems that Christian people are concerned very largely about their own personal salvation, which is taken to mean "going to heaven when they die." This is thought to be an unworthy and an unhealthy obsession. We can sympathize with such a reaction. It is true that the same Christians are often equally exercised about the salvation of others, and that is why some of them have an evangelistic attitude and may even become missionaries, but this is thought to be a somewhat arrogant intrusion into other people's privacy and almost indecent. They disapprove of such interference quite as much as most Christians disapprove of the critical but persistent attentions of Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons, noble though their aims may seem to themselves to be.

A third objection to salvation-talk arises from its apparent irrelevance. Dr. S. J. Samartha, a former Principal of Serampore, remarks that "there is a general feeling that religions, in their traditional forms, have failed to solve the urgent human problems of today and are therefore irrelevant in the modern world. . . . Did Christianity 'save' Martin Luther King from the assassin's bullet? What is the relevance of *Moksha* to the poor Harijan boy punished and burnt for a petty theft in a caste-ridden South Indian village? How does it help Vietnam if a few Buddhist monks and nuns set fire to themselves? Where is the 'peace' of Islam in the Arab-Israeli conflict? The staggering failure of religion in some of the most crucial areas of life makes any reference to salvation out of place" (*International Review of Missions*, October 1968, Vol. LVII, No. 228, page 424). Had Dr. Samartha written that article two years later he could hardly have failed to cite Ulster as a supreme example of such irrelevance. But he goes on to ask: "How can a group which manifests all the weaknesses of any other human community, proclaim the Gospel of salvation when within itself the evidences of redeemed life are so utterly lacking?" (*Ibid.*, page 431.)

A former missionary, Florence Allshorn, experienced the pain of this kind of challenge some fifty years ago in Uganda. Weeping at the failures of the local missionary community, she was approached by an old African matron who sat at her feet and said: "I have been on this station for fifteen years and I have seen you come out, all of you saying you have brought to us a Savior, but I have never seen this situation saved yet." We need to hear uncom-



fortable words and warnings such as these, lest we make ourselves ridiculous and bring the Gospel into disrepute by speaking of salvation too glibly. Evangelism is not well served in this way. No slick or narrow definition of salvation will carry any conviction with outsiders or even many church people today.

Turning to the Bible for guide-lines we find the broadest and most comprehensive concept of salvation. It related to the whole of life and to the whole world, to the individual, the family, society, the nations. It is operative in the past, the present and the future. It is situational, social, personal. It is immediate and it is ultimate. It is universal and inclusive. It is historical, eschatological and eternal. It is a daily experience, a constant possibility, a final hope. Nothing, no one, is beyond the range of this word. To confine its application either to the souls of men or to the progress of a nation is to tamper with the evidence and to be arbitrarily selective in the use of the Bible.

Yet this is precisely the issue today. How are we to think of salvation? On the one hand there are those for whom it is almost exclusively a personal term meaning the soul's salvation from sin and guilt by faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. On the other hand there are those for whom its main contemporary meaning is social progress and development, even revolution. There is enough biblical precedent for both. There is no biblical monopoly for either. The Church Missionary Society was founded by men who made no such dichotomy or polarization. They took sin seriously and in their own lives knew the salvation offered by Jesus Christ. But their interest did not begin

and end with individual souls. They were also concerned with slavery, education, moral standards, the improvement of social conditions. It is not fair to judge them in terms of the welfare state. On any showing they were well ahead of their time in an enlightened social conscience. A society which can name both William Wilberforce and Charles Simeon among its founders inherits a tradition and a responsibility for preserving and proclaiming a view of salvation which is both personal and social, moral and international. This in itself is an ecumenical contribution of major importance. Let us make it, without taking sides or submitting to labels. Our calling is to be both conservative and radical at the same time. We have to conserve that which cannot change if the Church is to remain Christian, but to reform all that must change if its message is to be heard and to make sense. The effort to understand and to communicate the meaning of salvation is an exercise requiring both these roles.

## I

In the Bible the concept of salvation is an evolving one. For the early Israelites it meant deliverance from war and oppression. The prophets and the psalmists give the word a much wider application, and in the New Testament it has acquired a great wealth of meaning. We must examine this development a little more closely, though in a sermon such as this it would be inappropriate to discuss the various linguistic niceties. The most dramatic experience in the history of Israel, which was to be commemorated for ever in the Passover ritual, was the deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The people had thrown off their bondage to Pharaoh and were es-

caping the country while he and his army pursued them. In front of them was sea, behind them were the Egyptian chariots at full chase. In comparison with such a crisis the bondage they were leaving seemed infinitely preferable. Terrified of Pharaoh and furious with Moses they cry out: "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, in bringing us out of Egypt? . . . And Moses said to the people, 'Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be still'" (Ex. 14:11-14). Clearly this is a physical salvation in a military context. But this is not its main feature. For Israel, then and subsequently, its fundamental significance is that it was "the salvation of the Lord." They did not save themselves, nor could they have done. God saved them.

This determined the predominant use of the word in the rest of the Old Testament. It is God who saves. He is the Savior of man and of his people. Here was the main difference between Israel's religious experience and that of the surrounding tribes. This was to be reiterated by the prophets again and again but on the grandest scale in Isaiah 45. The other nations "carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a god that cannot save" (v. 20). To them the Lord speaks: "There is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Saviour; there is none besides me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other" (21f). The Hebrews, unlike the Greeks, did not speculate or theorize

about God; they came to know him in terms of his capacity to save them in one situation after another. Long before they knew that Yahweh was the only God, they knew that he was a Savior God. So we may make our first affirmation: whatever salvation means it is God who brings it about. The God of the Bible is a God who saves and, as one writer puts it, "Even when men are sent as saviours, it is God who sends them and guides them to enable them to effect the deliverance of the people."

## II

A second affirmation follows from this, for in the Old Testament salvation is constantly linked with social righteousness. Israel was indeed saved from Egyptian oppressors but after the settlement in Canaan, Israel bred its own oppressors. The poor in the land needed deliverance from the cruelty of the rich and the injustice of the system. For the poor and the downtrodden salvation meant justice—as it still does in two-thirds of the world today. So Amos and the other prophets thundered their protests against those who were comfortable and affluent themselves and indifferent to the privations of others on whom their own wealth depended. "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). It is hardly surprising that it is to such protests that many in our generation turn when their consciences are roused about conditions in the Third World. Salvation in such circumstances cannot be limited to a religious experience. This is to deny the righteousness and mercy of God. "Listen to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go forth from me, and my justice for a light to

the peoples. My deliverance draws near speedily, my salvation has gone forth, and my arms will rule the people" (Isaiah 51:4,5). Law, justice, deliverance, salvation, are all held together; each involves the other. It is imperative that Christians, and especially members of our Society, think out the implications of salvation in these terms for missionary obedience in 1972.

In what sense were the Negroes of the American plantations who produced the popular "spirituals" saved? They knew of Jesus and his love; they cried to him for help with their troubles and burdens, as their songs testify; but they were the victims of bitter injustice; they were no more free than the Hebrews in Egypt; the greater part of their salvation was still future. In what sense were their owners saved? They went to church and said grace before meals. They were staunch evangelicals of a certain type. They too expected heaven when they died. But they were working and benefiting from an iniquitous system which they were reluctant to change. Would Jesus have been able to say to them as he said to Zacchaeus that salvation had come to their house? In what sense have those desperately poor Pakistani Christians, so movingly described by John Carden in his book *Empty Shoes*, entered into salvation? Has God's will for them been achieved because they have been baptized and are part of his little community in that country? Or does the salvation he brings and intends affect their economic conditions? If it does, what does that mean to the missionary movement today?

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who pub-

lishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (Isaiah 52:7). Is this still a valid program? What share do we have in pursuing it? It includes peace, good, salvation, and the kingship of God. How do we translate these ideas into action? The New English Bible renders one of these phrases "to proclaim prosperity." Do we really believe that biblical salvation includes prosperity? Are we content to offer a meager, anemic salvation to the masses of Brazil, and the migrating people of the Caribbean, and the millions of homeless human pawns in Bengal, and the discarded people of South Africa mercilessly dumped on the veld out of everyone's way?

In the Bible God began to show what he meant by salvation when he rescued slaves from Egypt and promised them a land flowing with milk and honey. Christian salvation is not less than that but more. There must be a concrete deliverance from whatever bondage defaces and dehumanizes mankind today. There must be a prospect at least equivalent to milk and honey, corn, wine and oil. That is why the true proclaimer of salvation, the true evangelist, will always be on the side of the deprived, not necessarily in sharing their opinions but in sensitivity to their plight. Evangelism in these terms means agitation. He who brings the Good News joins the struggle against bad conditions and injustice everywhere. The full-blooded salvation of the Bible does not by-pass economic and political realities. The transformation of the dark side of these realities is part of what salvation means. Salvation brings with it joy and drives away everything that cancels joy. Salvation is deliverance from all forms of human bondage which today include:

living on or over the margin of starvation, being illiterate, being unemployed because society is so ordered that profits and production take precedence over men, suffering discrimination on the grounds of race or color. In the light of all this it is not surprising that the World Council of Churches and its agencies continually remind Christians of the immense social program which our discipleship lays upon us. This is the second affirmation we are called to make about salvation today. No human condition is outside its reach because it is always the action of the God who cares through the people he sends.

### III

Our third affirmation is that this action has one focal point. At a moment of history it was concentrated in Jesus Christ, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again. This is the central drama of salvation. At his birth he was hailed as Savior. Holding him in his arms the aged Simeon blessed God and said "mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Preaching in the wilderness John the Baptist proclaimed the message of Isaiah, reaching its climax in the words "all flesh shall see the salvation of God." When Jesus began to preach he was conscious of bringing in the day of salvation. His first sermon in the Nazareth synagogue described it in words from Isaiah 61. It was good news to the poor, release to captives, recovering of sight to the blind, setting at liberty those who are oppressed, and proclaiming "the acceptable year of the Lord" that is "the year of the Lord's

favor" (Luke 4:18f) which elsewhere in Isaiah is equated with "a day of salvation" (Isaiah 49:8). Having noticed already the very broad canvas on which the Bible depicts salvation and how much it means, we now have to notice that this kind of salvation which Israel at its best had longed for was brought near and made available in Christ. "Today in your very hearing this text has come true," he said to the Nazareth congregation. God's plan of salvation, even in its broadest social and international aspects, is revealed in Christ, concentrated in Christ, and in some sense linked up with the obedience of Christ's community in which his saving powers are still at work. This is why the missionary obedience of the Church is crucial for world history and human progress. The salvation of the world's oppressed and starving millions is not to be thought of solely in terms of development and aid and independence and enfranchisement. The salvation described in the Bible, social though it undoubtedly is, is at the same time inextricably tied up with the proclamation of Christ. Apart from him it may be progress but it is not salvation.

One of the most important effects of Jesus Christ was the changed and changing attitudes of his followers. They were Jews with a difference. The new wine of salvation required new vessels of thinking and behavior. They found themselves saved from the narrow legalism which characterized Jewish religion as they entered a new life whose ethical principles were governed by divine love. Paul and other early Christians in the Hellenistic world found themselves saved from the principalities and powers, those impersonal elements and structures which influ-



enced and shaped contemporary life. At that time these powers were thought to reside in the heavenly bodies. Today we recognize the powers in commercialized sport and entertainment, in the structures of industry and politics. Men are often dominated by them and helplessly enslaved to them. The early Christians discovered that Christ had neutralized all such powers and that his salvation meant freedom from their bondage (Galatians 4:3-7; Colossians 2:13-15). Christ was a comprehensive Savior offering a comprehensive salvation. Just how comprehensive they took some time to discover, as do we. Peter was slow to discover that he needed to be saved from racist prejudices, and two chapters of the Acts of the Apostles record his post-conversion entry into the meaning of salvation at this point (Acts 10 and 11). Paul explained the meaning of salvation in the complex of family and business relationships. In his own life he found that it meant delivery from fears and prejudices of neurotic proportions. There were always new areas of life which needed saving; salvation had to be applied and re-applied. To be saved by Christ is to enter upon a process which starts with prevenient grace and includes baptism, confession of faith, sanctification, death and the day of judgment. God's deed of salvation in Christ was once for all. Our response to that deed can never be once for all; it has to be continuous as we grow and our circumstances change. The disciples marveled when Jesus saved them from the storm at sea. Later they discovered that by their own witness he could save a lame man at the Temple gate. They watched their community grow as "the Lord added to their number day by day those who

were being saved" (Acts 2:47), and they learned that his saving produced a community in which "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). The dimensions of salvation are larger than anything we can imagine or know.

#### IV

There is a further point. While in the Old Testament the material and physical aspects of salvation are emphasized, and it is clearly related to justice and social righteousness, in the New Testament a new dimension is added. Salvation becomes much more personal and moral. The Babe of Bethlehem is to be given the name Jesus, Savior, "for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). During his ministry Jesus specifically talked about this. To a paralyzed man he said, "My son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). On an embarrassing occasion in a Pharisee's house he referred to a woman of doubtful character whose attentions had been noticed by his host. "Her great love proves that her many sins have been forgiven." And this is followed by one of the most ironical remarks of the New Testament as the guests say among themselves "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" (Luke 7:47ff). For Jesus, healing and saving were synonymous and the same Greek verb is used for both. "Thy faith hath made thee whole" is the Authorized Version of the words Jesus used to the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:34), but the verb could equally well be translated "saved" or "healed" or "cured." Salvation means healing and wholeness, and at the heart of this healing is the experience of for-



giveness, cleansing, release. This was Christian salvation at the personal level. It was transmitted in many ways, by word, by touch, by love; it was felt in different areas of need; but its source was always Jesus Christ. His salvation was from fear and anxiety, from evil spirits, from every kind of sickness, from despair, from legalism, from wrong attitudes, from false religion, from sin and guilt and shame, and ultimately from the death which is annihilation and from the wrath of God.

The Epistle to the Hebrews makes the splendid assertion that "he is able to save to the uttermost" (AV)—that is "absolutely" (NEB), "for all time" (RSV), "fully and completely" (Phillips)—"those who draw near to God through him" (7:25). It is a salvation which reaches right out into the infinite future. The same writer claims that "it is like an anchor for our lives, an anchor safe and sure. It enters in through the veil, where Jesus has entered on our behalf as forerunner" (6:19f NEB). The salvation of Christ affords total cover; there is no conceivable circumstance or situation outside its scope. It is a condition of life to be embraced and entered into by faith. "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" (2:3). It is a gift procured by Christ to be obtained by men and to be worked out and followed through (Philippians 2:12). "Take the helmet of salvation" says Paul (Ephesians 6:17). "God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up," he writes in his first epistle to the Thessalonians (5:9-11). The New Testament has dozens of

such statements about salvation and the writings of Paul abound in them. The upshot is that present and ultimate security is available to all men everywhere in Jesus Christ and because of what he is and what he did. It is a free gift, the expression of his immeasurable grace and the sheer goodness of God. It is utterly undeserved on our part; we have no title to it because by nature we are selfish and rebellious and part of a humanity which has refused and resisted God, even while talking about him and sometimes trying to talk to him.

But the very fact that this unspeakable gift is equally undeserved by all, means that all equally deserve to hear about it. "Everybody should know," as the revival chorus puts it. No advertising program, no propaganda machine, can match the immensity of the task of proclaiming to three billion people the unsearchable riches of Christ. If we do not have this urge somewhere within us we should ask ourselves if we are undervaluing our Lord and his Gospel. For the chief characteristic of this gift once received is that it overflows. The Christian who says with one psalmist "I will take the cup of salvation" (Psalm 116:12 AV) has to exclaim with another "my cup runneth over" (Psalm 23:5 AV). Salvation is always for the individual, but if it is the real thing it is always too much for any one individual. The creed which begins "I believe" does not confess that Christ came for me and my salvation but "for us men, and for our salvation." A salvation clung to as a miser clings to gold is no salvation at all in the New Testament sense. It is a spiritual form of hypochondria. To be saved is to cease to worry about one's personal salvation, just as to be healthy

is to be free from anxiety about health. There is something gloriously unself-conscious about real health and real salvation. Both mean a complete unconcern about self. Obsession with one's own salvation is fatal, for "whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:35). "He saved others; himself he cannot save." And surely Paul had caught something of this utter unconcern for his own salvation when he wrote with typical hyperbole that he would be willing to forfeit his own salvation "for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race," the Jews who had rejected Christ (Romans 9:1-3).

We must affirm then and in the face of much contemporary Christian teaching and writing that Christian salvation which is certainly social is also personal, and that whenever it is deeply experienced as personal it has to be shared and find corporate expression and embodiment. Salvation is appropriated individually as men put their whole trust in Christ; it is expressed corporately as those "who are being saved" live by the power of God (1 Corinthians 18) and demonstrate to the world what that power is. In the last analysis salvation in its full biblical sense is the one and only business of the Church. Christ procured it; the Church proclaims it.

But does it? In the Church as we know it today can men and women discover the meaning of salvation and find the way of salvation and see the effectiveness of salvation? Will the World Council of Churches remind its member Churches that only the Word of Salvation can renew the Church and this Word must be proclaimed to save the world and make men fully human?

Will all Churches remember that they also continually need saving? Before denigrating the Church or dismissing it as a dying institution we should recall that "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:24-7). This is the "full salvation" the Wesleys preached—and we need that message now.

We began by admitting the problems which surround the salvation theme. We then recognized how broad and comprehensive it is as presented in the Bible. We found evidence enabling us to make certain affirmations: first, that God is always the author of salvation; second, that salvation embraces all human conditions, social, economic, political, international; third, that salvation became available through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and is concentrated in him; fourth, that in the New Testament salvation is also an intensely personal experience which men enter into by faith and express by membership of the Christian community. Our final affirmation must be (in the words of our text) that "there is salvation in no one else at all." This need not imply a negative attitude to other faiths in whose folds millions have lived and prayed and made moral effort and developed spiritual awareness and found some knowledge of God. Nor need it suggest that there is no salvation outside the Church, a doctrine which even Roman Catholics are repudiating. But it does assert that on Calvary and in Christ crucified something happened

to change the direction of history and the destiny of mankind. We are not called to deny the activity of God in other faiths or his activity in the affairs of men outside his own people. We are called to testify to one great objective deed which God wrought in Christ and in no one else. The God "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4) has achieved and offered that salvation by sending his Son to be the Savior of the world, and of every human

being. For as P. T. Forsyth has written "So great is a soul, and so great is its sin, that each man is only saved by an act which at the same time saves the whole world" (*The Work of Christ*, page 114). Without this act there would be no missionary task. Because of it there can be no respite from it.

That which Christ so hardly wrought,  
That which he so dearly bought,  
That salvation, brethren, say,  
Shall we madly cast away?

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# A Different Kind of Jesus

Sermon by EDUARD SCHWEIZER

*Revelation 1:9-20*

A FRIEND of mine told me an amusing story about his child. The little fellow came up to him one day, held up a tiny fist, and said, "What's in my hand?" My friend couldn't guess what it was, so the child opened an empty hand and explained, "God is there, for nobody can see God."

That exactly is our problem. No one can see God, yet we may have him in our hand. He is so strange, so very different, that we cannot really gaze upon him so long as we are men of this earth. Yet our very existence depends on the fact that he is with us and we with him, in the closest possible relationship.

An early Christian prophet by the name of John tells us how he gazed upon the risen Christ and how God himself took hold of his life through that experience and met him face to face. But what an incredibly strange Jesus it is—this Jesus who is about to meet us in the Scripture that records what happened to John! It is a Jesus quite different from the one we are accustomed to. But perhaps for that very reason he has a bare chance actually to get through to us, past all the multitude of things behind which we barricade ourselves. Perhaps this time he will be able to approach us in such a

*A native of Basel, Switzerland, Eduard Schweizer was a student under Brunner, Barth, and Bultmann. After eleven years in the parish, he became professor of New Testament Exegesis and Theology at Zurich. This sermon was translated by Professor James W. Cox of Louisville Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Cox has translated also a book of sermons by Schweizer entitled God's Inescapable Nearness (Word Inc., 1971).*

way as to make it impossible for us to say, "Yes, yes, so it is," and then quit listening because we think we already know everything he has to say to us, thanks to the hundreds of hours we have spent listening to sermons, Sunday school lessons, and other kinds of religious instruction.

From the mouth of this Jesus issues a two-edged sword. His word can inflict pain. John knows that. In fact, the Risen One has sent him forth as his witness. That is why he had to stand up for Jesus before men again and again, to summon them, and to protest against everything that could not pass muster in the presence of Jesus. That inflicted pain. Certainly some men did listen to him and liked what they heard. But others wanted to hear nothing from this witness and drove him away. It isn't easy to give up a house, a job, and a little bit of security and flee into an uncertain existence. "I, John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." What Jesus wants of us often cuts as a two-edged sword through all our wishes, plans, and comforts.

But that is not all a two-edged sword can do. It can not only inflict pain; it can kill. "When I saw him, I fell at

his feet as though dead." John knows that it can really kill. Later he describes those who were put to death because they stood up for this Jesus. But he himself experiences this dying. How remarkable it is that the same characteristic is so consistently carried through again and again from the Old Testament prophets up to the calling of the disciples or even of the New Testament prophets: When God becomes real, men experience it as death. What distinguished John from the Old Testament prophets is this: God encounters him in the form of Jesus. He is permitted to know that God is no longer some indefinite God who is differently conceived of by every nation. God is the one who comes to us in the man Jesus of Nazareth; God is the one who has given himself to us.

But this Jesus is not merely the dear Savior in whom we can place our trust. This Jesus is not our brother in such a way that we can clap him on the shoulder and say, "We are pals." This Jesus can be so incredibly strange that we almost die when he actually comes into our life. A Jesus who says, "He who loves father or mother, son or daughter, more than me is not worthy of me," is incredibly strange. A Jesus who leads his disciples into prisons and to the executioner's block, rather than from victory to victory for God's kingdom, is incredibly strange. A Jesus who continues to be the Savior in Auschwitz or in the jungle of Vietnam is incredibly strange. If we can be untroubled and comfortable Christians, then it may be that this Jesus has never yet become a reality in our lives. You and I are not prophets, so we cannot expect him to come to us in the same way he came to John. But what if those many things in our lives

that ought to die do not die? What if, instead, they grow and proliferate? If that is the case, we should ask ourselves whether he is actually with us or if perchance up to now we have passed him by.

All that is only the prelude. "But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, 'Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades!'" "I am the first and the last" is an age-old word of God to be found already in Second Isaiah. However, the Son of Man adds to it the words: ". . . and the living one." So it is not true that God simply sits enthroned in heavenly glory, aloof from us, and threatens from there to destroy us. In the man Jesus, God himself went even to the point of death. He became "a Son of Man," as our text puts it. His concern for us was so incredibly great that he completely entered into this one man Jesus and so completely identified himself with him that he—the God of heaven and earth—blazed the trail for us. That means Passiontide, into which we have entered again. But precisely at the point where God moved into solidarity with us, Easter took place. Jesus did not remain dead. The one who encountered his disciples at Easter, who here in the text takes John into his service, is for the first time the truly Living One. Everything before this that constituted living was indeed threatened by death. So it was not real life at all. Neither are the throes of one dying to be reckoned as actual living, for everyone knows that death is at hand.

What we know for sure about our present life is this: death will strike it down. But here—in Jesus, who en-



countered his disciples after Easter—real life was present. It was God's life, life without end, life no longer threatened by death. Death is now locked up, and Jesus Christ holds the key.

But how can a man come to believe that? Just as John learned how to do it! It will go less dramatically in our case, yet in the end it will be the same. We begin to live with the word of God and with the testimony for Jesus. One thing and then another has to die, and we will feel the touch of the sharpened sword. Habits to which we are very attached, plans that were very important to us, conveniences that we imagined we could not do without—these are taken from us. And Jesus will even many times become very strange to us; perhaps the more we try to live with him, the stranger he will become. Many times he becomes so strange to us that we no longer know whether we are really still Christians and believe in him. But in connection with all that, this is what happens: we discover that he is alive and does not let us go. Perhaps we could not put into words what we believe or do not believe. But he lives with us; he is not merely dead and gone. He does not let us rest content with our high standard of living or with our small-town or big-city ideals. And slowly, perhaps without our noticing how it happens, something is changed.

Have you observed that in the case of John? He begins, "I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance. . . ." So he no longer lives just his own private life. He lives as the brother and partner of many others who find life hard. And in everything, Jesus is no longer merely his Lord, the Lord of this devout man John, who

could give up so much for God and had experienced God in such an extraordinary way. He is the Son of Man who walks among the seven candlesticks, which is to say, among his churches. To a degree hardly true of any other book of the Bible, the Revelation is a church book, not a book of the individually devout.

What happens when one learns from Jesus even a tiny bit of this dying? At that point he liberates us from incessant preoccupation with our own happiness. In other words, he makes us open to other persons with whom we share our life. And all at once it is no longer terribly important whether everyone appreciates and praises us, whether life is a bit better to us or worse than to others, whether we are treated a little more fairly or a little less. Then we often see that it can help another man unbelievably if we for once do not come out ahead. We learn that it actually brings happiness when we let something overflow to others from all the good that is given to us. And we learn that days that are hard on us can hold a very great blessing in store for others.

But perhaps we have not said the most important thing about that yet. Wherever Jesus becomes so alive to us in such ways, there we learn to look into the future with joy. Indeed, John is given the task of writing down "what is to take place hereafter." If Jesus is alive and enters into our life again and again and calls us to a new way, then we know that he has much in prospect for us yet. No longer do we spend our time looking back like tired old men who still dream of the exciting experiences of their youth, which have been glorified in retrospect. Rather, we

look forward, full of excitement about what our Master has in prospect for us yet. Anyone who for the first time begins to live seriously with Jesus, as John did, knows what it is for God to become real to him. He knows and can say, "Not even death can destroy the reality of God and his care for me." In this way, he understands the resurrection of the dead which has already taken place in Jesus and which awaits us.

Therefore, we do not fear the end; we know that the full, complete life lies before us, not behind us. In this full, complete life, Jesus himself will be proved once for all to be the Living One, and he will take us into his life that ends no more, the life that for the first time is real, since it will be full communion with God. Then, my dear brothers and sisters, we shall see God as he is.

# On Being a Servant

Sermon by TERENCE E. FRETHEIM

*This sermon was delivered to a group of Lutheran pastors by the Rev. Terence E. Fretheim, associate professor of Old Testament at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. Dr. Fretheim is an alumnus of Luther College and of Princeton Theological Seminary (Ph.D., 1967).*

*Isaiah 50:4-9*

The parsonage is quiet. It's three o'clock in the morning; the pastor and his family are getting a well-deserved rest. Suddenly the telephone sends a piercing cry through the night. You nearly jump out of your skin, but you lie there for a moment hoping, hoping that it's just part of that ever-recurring dream. That dream that is an all too real reflection of life: On 24-hour call; 7 days a week; 11 months or more a year. Phones; doorbells; questions seeking answers; answers seeking questions. But you get up. Who is it? What's gone wrong? And the voice, perhaps familiar, perhaps unknown, streaks through the line: Something's happened! You've got to come! And in five minutes you're racing through the night, to somebody's side.

The local cafe is buzzing with conversation. It's lunch time, the middle of the day. Everyone that ever comes seems to be there. The menu: roast pastor. Have you heard? What the pastor went and did? He invited a bunch of long-haired college kids to come to the church next week and talk about the war. Can you imagine! In the church! A special council meeting. Everyone's got time tomorrow night.

In the machine shed welding sparks are flying in all directions. It's late November, the last night of the Trinity season. Cold. An old iron wheel from a

farm wagon; five sections of conduit attached; some chain; a hook for the ceiling; all painted black. The parsonage doorbell rings, and tired but smiling faces wonder if you'd accept an Advent wreath. The work of their hands.

The church seems suspended in mid-air. It's early Sunday morning, half an hour before anyone else shows. A time to get your head, your heart, yourself together. The hymns, the prayers, the sermon. They're all in order. Just some time to sit and listen to the Bible. Just to listen. No commentaries, no outline of exegetical steps, no special preparation for some future service. Just that book, just an old-fashioned encounter with that often analyzed but not enough read book. It's a frightening thought to realize that God in his freedom has chosen to depend upon you. But you walk out the sacristy door knowing that finally it is *his* word, not yours, that has the power to sustain the weary.

On being a servant. The text read is one of the servant songs of Isaiah. These songs give a highly complex picture of ministry as servanthood. When we read these songs, our minds almost instinctively leap forward to recognize in them the life, sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. But we also have to recognize that the songs have primary reference to servanthood in a sixth-century B.C. context. And because they have a broad reference in their original setting, it is important for us to move beyond a

simple reference to Jesus, and to seek to draw upon these texts in our efforts to understand generally what ministry as servanthood is all about.

Without going into detail, the picture of the servant given is one which takes up into itself characteristics of leading servants throughout Israel's history. The servant is Abraham and Moses and David and Jeremiah. All of what it has meant to be a servant of God in Israel's past is here pulled together and presented as a call to all Israel to take up its God-given destiny to be a faithful witness to the word of God in present and future. Not all Israel would respond, of course, but each one who did was a servant of God. And all who would search for what it means to be a servant will find here a composite of what servanthood has been and ought to be.

# I

This, the third servant song, brings into focus the following perspectives on servanthood: the servant is one who continues to be taught. He has an open ear. The servant is taught in order that he might know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. His listening-learning issues in a specific word of God to those inflicted with weariness. The word that the servant speaks will inevitably meet opposition. The servant is one who is despised, rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But he knows that God is present, that he will stand by his servant to the end, and bring him to his rest.

The situation to which the servant of the sixth century B.C. is called is one characterized by a profound weariness. In the Old Testament, weariness is understood primarily not in terms of

physical or mental exhaustion like after a hard day's work. Rather, weariness is a deterioration of the power of faith to affirm the God-directedness of life. It is that state of affairs in which God's creative/redemptive activity is thought to be absent and the threat of chaos/disorder looms large. It afflicts all men, but the people of God may be especially susceptible.

The devastation wrought by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. meant the end of temple, city, land, kingship, all those God-given blessings which structured life and gave meaning to it. A displaced people, cast out from the land in which God was known to be present and active. Exposed to hostile powers, the forces of chaos, it was an experience of the end of creation, the exhaustion of the salvation history. God is seen to be inactive, far away, seemingly unconcerned about the lives of his people. As those to whom Second Isaiah preached put it: "My way is hid from the Lord; and my right is disregarded by my God." Or, as Job cried out, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him."

Such weariness just may be the peculiar malaise of our time. Whether he is able to articulate it or not, the Christian knows that his God is a God of history, a God who has acted decisively in key events which lie at the heart of his faith. But when *was* the last time God acted? Just take a look around. Justice seems forever frustrated; wars never end; a crisis every other week; the sheer malice and deceit of the human heart, even the rebelliousness of those who go by the name of Christian, the breakdown of familiar structures like family, city, church, and in any town one would care to name, there is grief enough to freeze the blood. The God



who acts? And if he does act, where are the prophets to say where and when and how? And if someone seems called to the role of prophet, who trusts him? When the Lordship of God is no longer recognized or acknowledged, life returns to its pre-creation state: chaos, disorder, fragmentation, meaninglessness.

Often men then revert to a cyclical type of thinking. Ecclesiastes reflects this: "All things are full of weariness. A generation goes; a generation comes; the sun rises; the sun goes down; what has been will be, and what has been done will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun." When the mythical foundation of such perspective no longer seems possible, it can be overwhelming in its futility. But in his search for that which is beyond himself, in his crying out for an encounter with that which he is not, modern man may attach himself to mythical figures or resurrect mythical systems, to which the current interest in astrology and occult practices may attest. There seems to be an increasing desire for the re-sacralization of the natural order, like that seen in some ecologists' views. Or, subtly, like increasing numbers of Americans, who with every modern convenience that can be carried in, on top of or behind a car, flood the parks, searching among the jack pines and chipmunks for some experience of the divine.

Or, in more orthodox fashion, God is made into a maneuverable predictable God. The Christian is sometimes attracted to a brand of biblical interpretation that is able to pinpoint for him in a rather precise fashion the time and place of God's activity in the modern world, from the formation of the Common Market to the battle of Armageddon.

Or, the Christian straps the Holy Spirit into a straight jacket, so that with the proper bag of exercises and incantations, he is able to conjure him up to start working right on the spot. Weariness.

## II

The servant of God is called to sustain with a word him that is weary. What word? Morning by morning God wakens his ear to hear as those who are taught. It is only the Word of God that can speak to such a situation. That word with a goal, that word that strikes home with power, that word which shines like a light on this dark place of a world. The word of the servant is not his own. He speaks what he hears. He hears in being taught. The servant is a learner, and the teacher is God himself. It is his word which the servant is to receive and with which he is entrusted. And the servant will betray by what he says the one to whom he has been listening. But how does one hear; where does one go to listen?

The primary place to which a servant must go to hear his master speak is the Scriptures. He is to be a listener to that Word of God which speaks there. If he can speak in such a way as to sustain the weary, it is only because he has allowed himself to be spoken to in and through the Bible.

It is perhaps one of the greatest dangers of life in the parish that the pastor will get to thinking that he has the Word, he has the message. That the primary responsibility he has now is to develop the skills, the techniques, the right kind of programs to put that message across. From the perspective of servanthood, that's not only dangerous, that's fatal. "Morning by morning he

wakens my ear. . .” The Word of God is not something that is given once and then may be considered to be under the servant’s control, with only the problem of communication. The Word can never be possessed; it must always be received again and again; it must always be heard anew, struggled for, wrestled with. It involves a continual encounter in these foundation documents of the faith between God and the servant, and not simply out of a concern for being a vehicle to enable *others* to encounter him. It is only as the servant encounters God ever anew for himself, as *he* listens and learns that the Word can move through him to others.

If I may speak quite practically for a moment, I think this means setting aside regular periods of time, sitting with the Bible alone with a minimum number of aids, simply listening. In this day of activism, when the pastor is so much on the go, such a suggestion seems almost out of the question. It does call for special discipline. But more than that, as a servant of *God* and not clocks and calendars, he has no final say as to his daily schedule. The master sets the priorities and listening to his Word is at the top of the list. However attractive listening on the go or praying on the go may be, it is never enough. Lest the servant, too, succumb to the weariness in which he wades day after day, he is called to submit himself with ears open to his Lord. Listen to Luther: “People are busy with everything else day and night and there is no end to it. The Holy Scriptures are the only things untouched as if they weren’t needed. The Scriptures demand a humble reader who stands in awe and fear before what God is saying, and who constantly pleads: “Teach me! Teach me! Teach

me! Wake up! Study! Truly you cannot read the Bible too much!”

### III

The emphasis is here placed on the servant’s openness, his openness to being taught *new* words by God, so that he can proclaim the *new* thing God is about to do. The history of the servant ought to be the history of his education into ever new ways of God with his world. Such an encounter does not make for much certainty and security; it makes for a more radical uncertainty. It places in jeopardy all your present ways of doing and saying things. It means that you can never really settle down with what you already believe or know. It means a continuing flexibility, an openness to ever new words and ever new ways. It makes for the kind of openness of an Isaiah who one year could counsel surrender to the enemy and the next year counsel resistance. It’s the kind of an Amos who was called upon to proclaim the Word of God with hardly a hint of the Gospel. It’s that capacity to stand you right on your head, to come straight at you with a new Word of God for a new time and place that makes that listening with the Scriptures process so crucial for the servant of God.

It also means that to come to your people with that ever new word from God that your beards have had it. For that word to the weary is not, finally, a series of humanly encouraging words, some optimistic comments about the future, some platitudes about peace of mind. It is that unique word which announces the presence, the involvement of God in the maelstrom of life which alone can conquer weariness. And when God himself comes bearing

gifts, men often flee or attack in self-protection. For men cannot receive such a word and remain the men that they are. Mind-sets, structures, priorities are shaken to their very roots when God's active word is spoken. The servant should know that opposition to such a word of God is inevitable, that he will be made to suffer for such a proclamation. In point of fact, as Luther says, "The most dangerous attack we can face is not being attacked, but having everything go fine." Regular listening to the Word of God does not insulate you from the world, it drives you out into it with that new word.

The songs are filled with the servant's struggle with the opposition he meets from his hearers. He is driven to doubts and questions: "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought and vanity." Possessed with an inescapable sense that God had given him a message to declare, what sense can he make of seeming failure? The servant seems finally to realize that opposition is not necessarily failure. It is natural to want to see positive results, but there is many a time when the servant will have to be content with the knowledge that the Word he hears is being proclaimed, and that faithfulness to God and the Gospel is its own reward. He has to remind himself that while God's Word will not return empty, it will accomplish that for which *God* purposes and will prosper in the thing for which *He* sent it. And, as for his own success, that can never be measured in terms of the numbered results of his proclamation. That is something for which the servant must wait upon God who, in his own good time, will vindicate him who is his faithful witness.

## IV

In even more striking fashion, the servant must realize that his suffering is not fundamentally a problem; it is a vocation. It is something he is called to do: "I gave my back to the smiters." The suffering of the servant is incorporated by God into his purposes. It is used by God as an instrument of creation/redemption in ways beyond our knowing. And the servant of God comes at this from the special perspective of his Lord: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps." The life of the servant assumes the shape of the suffering God in the maelstrom of life.

And it is precisely that suffering of God in the lives of his people that becomes the key word to those who are weary. God has not left his people. He is involved in the very fabric of their everyday existence. He accepts and enters into human weariness and, in so doing, restores wholeness and order. He brings rest. The servant proclaims from the tops of the mountains this creative/redemptive activity of God: "Do you not know, have you not heard? The Lord, the everlasting God, creator of the wide world, grows neither weary nor faint; no man can fathom his understanding. He gives vigour to the weary, new strength to the exhausted. Young men may grow weary and faint, even in their prime they may stumble and fall; but those who wait for the Lord will win new strength, they will grow wings like eagles; they will run and not be weary, they will march on and never grow faint."

Don't make your God too small! He is the everlasting God, the continuing

creator of the wide world, but his purposes can be seen only brokenly at any one point in time. There are no limits to his involvement; no disorder which he cannot make right; no depths to which he will not go to care for his own. Wait for the Lord; live daily in openness to *his* possibilities. He will come with strength and renewal. Even though his hand may be hidden; his arm is not shortened that he cannot

save. Trust his word. Live, breathe, rejoice in the time of waiting. He will come ever anew in Jesus Christ and say to all his servants: "Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest."

The church seems suspended in mid-air. In the machine shed sparks are flying in all directions. The cafe is buzzing with conversation. The parsonage is quiet.

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### OUR BEST HOPE FOR RENEWAL

The churches in the West experienced a time of renewal during the middle third of this century. It included a theological renaissance, an ecumenical advance, and a liturgical movement. In all these the Reformed churches participated and were enriched in their life and witness. But a dramatically different climate exists today. Theology has been dissolved into such aberrations as the "death of God" school, the theology of secularity, etc.; the ecumenical advance has been arrested; and the liturgical movement has been virtually abandoned as a new mood of subjectivism and self-expression has gained the ascendancy. What has suffered most as a result of this shift is Christian worship and, consequently, Christian witness. Where there is no consciousness of grace, there is neither worship nor gratitude. And where there is no gratitude, there is no witness. The Church is summoned today to take a long and serious look at her priorities, and my contention is that when she does she will insist that her first responsibility is the restoration of worship to the center of her life. Our generation has rediscovered the world and has become lost in it, or, better, we have lost the pearl of great price without which we are paupers. Our best hope lies in the congregations who have maintained the centrality of the Word and the sacraments and from whom will come the vital impulses quickened by the Holy Spirit that will once again transform the Church and renew her mission.—James I. McCord, in "Worship in the Reformed Churches," *Reformed World* (June 1973), 32, 6, pp. 249-250.



# Issues and Problems in Contemporary Preaching

by RONALD E. SLEETH

*A member of the faculty at Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, Texas, the Reverend Ronald E. Sleeth delivered this paper as his presidential "state-of-the-union" address before the American Academy of Homiletics at Princeton, December 1, 1972. An alumnus of Yale Divinity School (B.D.) and Northwestern University (Ph.D.), Dr. Sleeth is the author of several books on communication and preaching, including Persuasive Preaching (Harper, 1956).*

WE are all undoubtedly familiar with Lincoln's story of the man who was ridden out of town on a rail. Speaking of the incident, he said later, "If it had not been for the honor I should just as soon walked." One of the newly accrued honors of being elected president of this distinguished society was the executive committee's decision to have the president read a paper at the annual meeting. (It should be said that the decision was made after the election.) Nevertheless, I have accepted this assignment along with the honor of the presidency and with the responsibilities that go with both.

The choice of topic for the paper has caused much more *angst* than one would normally think necessary. For example, my first thought (as many of yours would be) was to take some aspect of homiletics in which I had an interest or in which I was working and then develop a scholarly paper which could serve as a springboard from which a discussion could ensue which would undoubtedly serve many of our needs for interchange among colleagues and peers. In my own case, though history is not much in vogue these days, I was sorely tempted to read a paper in some area of this field which is one of my greatest interests. Or, I thought of another look at biblical

preaching, but then decided that I had said about all I wanted to say at this point; besides, we have a New Testament scholar with us at this weekend who is certainly more competent in hermeneutics than I. Therefore, it became increasingly clear to me that what I must do is to deliver what might be called a state-of-the-union address. As I thought about the preparation, it became increasingly clear that what the president should do is to survey the field and raise the issues that all of us must deal with in one way or another. This is not to say that scholarly issues won't be raised or that my view of the field does not provide us with discussion material either as to the accuracy of my vision which is the sin of commission or the tempting, and for some more important, issues which I am ignoring—the sin of omission. However, my purpose is clear in proposing to raise issues which deserve all of our attention at the present time and for the immediate if not long-range future.

1. *The first area that deserves our attention is the theological bases of preaching.* I have long been one of those of you who has maintained that the proper understanding of the role of the preacher is a theological one. This is a dangerous stance for it tends to make us defensive with the criticisms of the

preaching role which come from those especially within the church. When the efficacy of the preaching is doubted as a viable means of communicating the Gospel, there is a real temptation to reply with a theology for preaching which borders on verbal gnosticism or a neo-Reformation scholasticism which equates Luther's interpretation of the Word of God with the Word of God itself.

Yet, at the same time, it is clear that we must not be subverted from keeping the battle on the proper playing field. So much of the criticism of preaching has to do with the bad practice of preaching. It is concerned to show that preaching as a form and method do not measure up to modern theories of communication or other effective means of public speaking. It is a terrible indictment on all of us if we be led into the trap of defending the status quo of preaching as practiced in so many pulpits and thereby respond to the critics by inviting them to help us by either shoring up the old girl with a few new techniques or by abandoning her all together for enticing new mistresses.

For, I still would want to maintain the theological foundation of preaching as an indispensable element in the transmission of the Word of God in the community of faith. And in saying that I am raising serious questions about whether preaching stands in the categories of the classical traditions of rhetoric. That is to say, the canons of good communication which undoubtedly embrace the traditional areas of deliberative, forensic, and epideictic speaking simply do not embrace sufficiently the task of Christian preaching from its content (invention: the Gospel it-

self) to its end (calling for commitment). While much of the secular canons of rhetoric (persuasion, for one example) can be of great help to the preacher, the nature of the speech-event in relation to its content and the end toward which one moves forces me to attest that preaching cannot be subsumed under the traditional canons of classical rhetoric and must be seen in an altogether different light.

Part of this different light is, of course, the relationship of the preaching of the Word to the Word itself. Surely this does have historical roots in the Reformation view of the Word of God as being a preached word. Whether the foundation is as explicit as some of the creeds during that period, it is clear that the historical Protestant tradition has been inextricably tied to some such affirmation as the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God. Now there are variations on that theme, to be sure, but it has persisted and time after time we have insisted that to deal with preaching at its basic roots is to deal with it theologically, for it is on that foundation that its claims rest. And we must also emphasize that this concern for the primacy of proclamation has not been alone the province of preachers and teachers of preaching. (Indeed, if practice is any indication, then a theological grounding of the task is almost a foreign subject to many who practice the preaching role.) Instead, it has been the theologians and biblical scholars who have insisted that proclamation is the constitutive element in the definition of the church itself. (It is ironic that even in our own day when preachers and homiletics are queasy over the efficacy of their task, there are theologians and biblical schol-

ars who take the role of preaching quite seriously.)

One example of this current Reformation concern for preaching and the basis upon which many of us have based our work in the field has been the Word-Event theology clustered around the work of Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling. There is no need to lay out in detail the essence of their positions, but they do exhibit the fact that the Reformation doctrine of the preached word being vitally related to the Word of God is still a viable view. As Ebeling understands it, the Word of God has entered language though the event it creates and to which it refers is more than speech. It has to do with reality which it changes. It changes reality for the conception of word entails an encounter. Interesting enough, he sees the word-event as communication since the words which take place make partners and participation. The words uttered effect something, not alone carries of meaning. Man speaks because he is addressed. Thus, the event of the Word of God is necessarily bound up with entire life of language. The Word of God becomes proclamation because man is addressed in language and when the proclamation of what the text has proclaimed becomes proclamation again in present experience then the word has been spoken and the word has created the event for the hearer—who is really a participant.

Though this is brief and sketchy, there is enough to suggest that the Word of God theology is not alone Reformation theology in the historical sense, but is of hermeneutical concern in the existential present—proclamation veritably communicating God's word to man through human speech. Though

we shall return to it again, it is also interesting to note that a theologian such as Ebeling connects this theological perspective with the theory of language itself which ironically makes him much closer to communicative theorists than at first glance would seem probable.

But we must examine the real issue underlying this persistent strain of resting the claims of the preacher on the concept of the Word of God and the corollary that that word is a spoken one. For, at the foundation of the discussion is clearly the problem of *revelation*. I am sure that the question of the efficacy of preaching is really the theological problem of revelation. The Word of God theology in the Reformation, to say nothing of the New Testament, rests upon the claim that God has spoken to man through his Word (in creation, in his prophets, in Christ, in the Scriptures) and continues to speak through the words of his preachers. That is a theological conception of revelation and as long as it is tenable then the basis of preaching is secure and the criticisms against the practice of preaching for not being communicative enough for our day seem irrelevant. On the other hand, if the issue is joined at the nature of revelation then we will have a radical encounter at the very point where preaching has been resting for so long in the Protestant tradition. My own feeling is that that battle is being waged now and will be even more so in the immediate future. For, it is clear that much of the concern with the seeming arrogance of the pulpit-centered theology rankles not alone because of the apparent doctrine of transubstantiation moving from altar to pulpit (that is, the nature of sacrament which has been involved in pri-

macy of preaching), but the basic underlying concern is with how God reveals himself—if he does at all.

Coming to this insight has been a revelation for me. The present and future discussions of preaching can proceed clearly from this point. No more as homiletics will we need to pull up the drawbridge, retreat to our castles and yell that preaching is the center of the faith because that is the Reformation view of preaching and then shout slogans from Luther from all the towers. On the other hand, we can rightly assert that many of the criticisms of preaching (not enough dialog, preaching is rationalistic, preaching is authoritarian, etc.) are mostly irrelevant if not insipid. We need to help ourselves and our critics see where the game is being played and for me that is in the stadium called Revelation not in the parking lot called more effective communication methods.

Now I am not sure how this all will come out. It may indeed signal the end of preaching as we know it. The future of the pulpit may be problematic. But, at least for me, it is clear that what is at stake is whether what many have affirmed as the historic Word of God revelation theory is no longer efficacious as a theological tenet upon which to base God's coming to man. This issue throws us not only into a discussion of preaching but of theology itself. We can see involved in this discussion everything from death-of-God to 'man come of age' to secular Christianity and to what seems clear to many of us an almost radical change (whatever the label) from theology to anthropology. If it can be shown that scripture is no longer normative, or that the kerygmatic message is too narrow, or that

Word of God can no longer be capitalized, or that the experience of God is transmitted apart from human speech (upon which word-theology is based), or that Christian faith is an undefined and non-theological experience (a many faceted as well as many splended thing), then it seems to me that pulpit proclamation may be in grave jeopardy. On the other hand, though I hear criticisms of the classical theories of revelation, I do not hear a clear-cut description of what new theories of revelation look like for the approaching future, assuming that God does and will continue to reveal Himself.

2. *Another concern for our preachers today (students and practitioners) is what might be called the ontology of preaching.* Simply put, many today within the church are questioning the preaching office under the guise of its ineffectiveness or its authoritarian theological claims when the real problem is the preaching office in relation to their own being. They have discovered—and rightly so—that preaching reveals their own internality and that is a terrible threat for they are not sure of their own being and the resultant insecurities of faith and personality that exposure unveils. So, I have found that many students attempt to dodge preaching classes, not because of their doubts about the efficacy of preaching and/or because they have the apostolic and mythological tradition handed to them that Practical Division courses are Mickey Mouse. They do not want to preach for they fear the revelation of their innermost being. The preaching situation can be a shattering experience for them either because of the protective wall they want to keep around their psyche or because their own theological affirma-



tions are tenuous or non-existent. Now I do not propose to drink the exhilarating elixir made by combining Sigmund Freud and H. H. Farmer into the professional homiletician's mix of teaching preaching. Some of you are skilled in both areas and perhaps teach with the double-eye of psychology and preaching. I make no pretense of doing so and other than that concern for human beings which should permeate every classroom, I do not attempt to enter into a counseling relationship with my students. (It might be said parenthetically though that since by design I visit privately with each of my students, I find out much that makes me understand what they are doing in the classroom.)

There is an obverse side to all of the insecurity in the face of the preacher's role, however. I have noticed that in the preaching sections of the past few years there has been a great deal of self-discovery going on. As students come to the anxiety-producing moment of preaching the Gospel (whatever they can make of that), they find the self-revelation can be therapeutic as well as frightening. I do not mean to suggest that the pulpit should be a place for self-therapy nor do I believe a preacher preaches himself. I simply affirm that if the student finds he can state something authentically in congruence with his theology (whatever it is) and has reasonable emotional health, then he can find the preaching experience both challenging and growing. Our emotions, as Phillips Brooks reminded us, is involved in our preaching. In short, a student can write a paper on Bultmann without being a Bultmannian. It is difficult for him to preach something contradictory to his own authenticity—even when hid-

ing behind manuscripts, pulpits, liturgy, or robes.

Part of the modern preacher's dilemma and close to what I have called ontology (or his own being *vis à vis* preaching) is the whole problem of authority and advocacy. Whether it is what some call the permissive society, or the influence of psychology, or the growth of group dynamics, or the breakdown of the Calvinistic ethical system of our societal structure, or the tides of the moon, or whatever; preachers do seem to have increasing difficulty in handling the advocacy-authority syndrome. It is obvious that the theological picture has changed and that has taken its toll. The grandfathers (Niebuhrs, Barths, Tillichs) are gone, they didn't leave many stalwart sons, and the grandsons have not grown tall yet. In any event, students are often unsure of their faith and indeed come to seminary to find it (I tell them that a seminary is the worst place in Christendom to find God). It used to be that we had our "call" and then went to seminary to be trained. At many seminaries this is no longer the case. Even discounting the Vietnam war objectors and the lovers of academic religious settings, there is an increasing body of students, preachers, and even professors who are nervous over not only the authority of the word, but of the Bible, theology, and Church. Many of us will take what we can get so we are not terribly thrown by this development and some of these theological "nibblers" often turn into effective ministers. But, the problem of advocacy is there. We don't want to be advocates. We have difficulty in discerning the distinction between authority and authoritarianism. Advocacy smacks of authoritarianism and we don't want to tell

people things. When this coupled with the preacher's own theological questionings, it is easy to see the problems raised. Yet, we live in a world of advocacy. Democracy is not a group of people with no opinions, but contending people with a variety of opinions. Even communication theorists define communication as 'eliciting a response.' (Berlo) yet we are nervous about that in the pulpit. One would assume that a post-resurrection, baptized Christian is an advocate and one of our tasks in preaching (and teaching of it) is to translate that concern for advocacy into the pulpit without turning the sermon into an argument or a dogmatic broadside.

3. *A third major area that commands our attention is the fall-out from the so-called electronic revolution.* Very little time needs to be spent in demonstrating the impact of Marshall McLuhan. Whether one considers this strange and disturbing writer a prophet, the son of a prophet, or the Messiah himself, his work has generated great interest and many of our peers and students have seemingly swallowed him hook, line, and thinker. A teaser and prober, his work is open to many kinds of interpretation and can be used for various ends. But, the movement he represents needs to be taken seriously by those who teach homiletics. This is the other end of the spectrum from the theological concern dealt with earlier, but I see no inconsistency here for although the basis of our task may be theological we are also in history as custodians of an incarnational religion. Whatever the word is, it is a word in history so we are concerned about the milieu in which the Gospel is proclaimed. In theological terms, and in over-simple shorthand,

we jump from Barth to Tillich in our teaching and preaching. So for this reason, among others, we deal with McLuhan's concern neither out of fear by defensiveness nor out of faddism by becoming McLuhaniacs. Although it is difficult to unpack all of Mr. McLuhan's many-sided claims, one of the chief points is his belief that Gutenberg and the printing press (and subsidiarily the Bible and Protestantism) are the culprits that took us from a pre-literate oral society to a linear age in which literacy and typology locked us into a sequential, one-after-another word order which causes fragmentation, departmentalization and, above all, disjointed thinking and acting from feeling and emotion. Now that the electronic revolution has come with television as the swash-buckling leader we are now in a new environment no longer with specialized segments, but we have moved to Gestalt patterns signified by the global village concept. We have gone from content to total effect. The medium of communication is much more important than what is being communicated. Indeed, the form alters the content of communication. The T.V., for example, is altering our perception not by what is shown but as a channel of mediating the message. There is now an all-at-onceness in communication which no longer separates message from communication itself; which fosters unification and involvement; which no longer fragments thought from feeling; where events that occur to us are simultaneous happenings. Our perceptions and communications are multi-leveled, simultaneous, and all-at-once as over against linear, sequential, fragmented, rationalistic, "hot." "Hot," of course, is his term for communication which is high in defini-

tion and low in participation. "Cool," obversely, is that which is low in definition and which is completed by our participation in the communicative process.

It is something like these brief teasers and probings that have set our students off with the heady wines of criticizing preaching as being logical, linear, and analytical while true communication is poetic, intuitive, and gestalt. The pulpit monologue speech can no longer cut it; thus, we must find new forms which involve the congregation in participatory communication and reach them through their many senses in an all-at-onceness. We can accomplish this through films, dance, and musical experiences which supplement if not abolish the spoken word. The non-verbal, non-rational aspects of communication simply cannot be transmitted by a person speaking to a group.

It is not my intention to criticize McLuhan just as it has not been my intention to give a full-blown treatment of his ideas. Some of you have been making your critique as I have gone along. I simply want to make two observations in regard to the ideas raised by McLuhan's rather unsystematic probings. First, communication is certainly more than rational meaning and rational discourse. McLuhan is right if he means to say that communication is more than meaning. A sermon, to use our concern, is an all-at-once communicative experience; it does transmit the non-verbal and the non-rational. It is—rightly conceived—a multi-leveled, existential discourse. Good preaching—as any good communication—should be a total communicative experience which entails complete involvement; an event—if you please—relating God and peo-

ple, people and people, preacher and God, people and preacher, etc. A good sermon can and should do these things and if we are not aware of these aspects of communication and have not been teaching them, then we should not be surprised if students are awhoring after other gods. For only one example, if we are teaching them exegesis, structuring of ideas, writing and reading of manuscripts and labeling that preaching then it is no wonder they are hurrying next door to the art school to bring in ballet dancers on Sunday morning.

Second, perhaps as homileticsians we have been too rapid to accept the mythologies that have grown up around the McLuhan syndrome and have responded too quickly with sweaty palms. In many ways the emphasis being made can be seen as an aid to our enterprise. Remember again McLuhan's analysis of the periods from the tribal pre-literate state through the Gutenberg-literate stage to the present electronic age and the global village again. His affirmation is that the electronic age is taking us again into the realm of the total sensorium and that basic experience is an oral one as was the tribal society itself. Many critics of McLuhan as well as admirers tend to forget that he calls speech a cool medium. Of course, the various modes of speaking have higher and lower definitions and are therefore less cool or hot as the case may be, but speech itself—even in McLuhan's terms—is a cool medium. Words are media in speech, involving all of the senses. So, the McLuhan revolution may not be as much of a threat as we think. For, on the one hand, it may make us aware that depth perception of human communication is lacking in many preachers and we may have to take responsi-

bility for the one-dimensional speaking emanating from pulpits all over America. On the other hand, and for some ironically, the global village concept may once again lead us to a rediscovery of the spoken voice as the primary vehicle for human communication and we may then discover that we have run up the white flag of surrender prematurely.

4. *It is here that we are led to the fourth area which commands our attention. For while we are nervously deserting the pulpit battlements and joining the enemy in the camp of non-verbal symbols and new forms of proclaiming the Christian message, communication theorists are busy doing battle for us in another area where their concern is to maintain the efficacy of the spoken voice over against the printed word.* Some of you may remember Dr. Frank Dance who was one of our speakers last year. Dr. Dance is one of the outstanding theorists of communication. It is interesting to note that his basic contention is the foundational aspect of human verbal speech. (It is also interesting to note he defines communication as eliciting a response which raises another interesting aspect of sermon-making at the time when we preachers are cautious about the ethics of persuasion. Incidentally, he contends we misuse non-verbal; we really mean, non-vocal, for verbal is the basis of human communication.) Among other things, Dance argues that all the good things we claim speech doesn't do as over against non-verbal forms is precisely what the verbal does as over against printing. For example, print is the authority of monologue; spoken is dialog; print is alienation, spoken participation; print rests on dependency,

speech develops autonomy; print emphasizes sequentiality, speech simultaneity. Now whether Dance is correct in his judgments on writing (similar to the McLuhan broadside on print) it is interesting to note this emphasis of the basic function of the spoken word by a secular communicator at the very time we are terribly unsure about its efficacy.

Another communication theorist who affirms Dance's position is Walter Ong, the great Jesuit scholar who developed his ideas in the Terry Lectures. In his work on *The Presence of the Word* you can find a philosophically based rationale for the spoken word as the central fact of human communication. (Ong is also a good person to read to see a philosophical background of the material which McLuhan simply probes.) For Ong, word is a spoken word though at this point I'm not speaking theologically. Even when written, the word is an event in sound. It is the word (spoken, of course) which establishes contact with human existence. It is the primary medium of communication, for communication flowers in speech. Here again for Ong as for Dance, the antagonist is not non-verbal symbols, but printing. Writing, he contends, shifts balance of senses from aural to visual. Word is living, not inert record of meaning, but something alive like sound, active as something is going on. This is why for him, if not for theological reasons, the New Testament Gospel (Word) is tied to the spoken word of man. The human word exists in a mysterious connection with the Divine. In the Old Testament *dabar* in Hebrew ties together word and event. But apart from theology, this verbal communication is a person's means of entering into the life and consciousness



of others and thereby deeply into his own life.

Historically, Ong spells out his concern for the oral in much the same manner as McLuhan, but Ong does it with more depth. In describing the stages of the word he, too, moves from the first stage oral or oral-aural to script-alphabet-type to electronic. Rather than seeing the mass media, electronic age, etc. as supplanting the oral, Ong contends that our oralism is linearly controlled as early oralism was not, but the communication is still oral. Writing, for him, is derivative of speech, not vice versa. The sound of speech is a special sensory key to interiority and the encounter between man and man is achieved largely through voice. It is sound that situates man in the middle of actuality and in simultaneity, whereas vision situates man in front of things and in sequentiality. Further, thought itself is nestled in speech. Even deaf children learn from vocalizers. They participate indirectly in a world held together by voices.

So, here again, and interestingly enough, theorists are defining communication as a spoken word in the basic human relationships just at the moment we who are working in homiletics are feeling our greatest moments of doubts. It may be that one of the issues of our future is to capture again the magic of the spoken word, not to defensively maintain the status quo, but to give majesty once again to the preaching office. Could it be as Vander Leeuw has said: "In living speech time becomes KAIROS, the due season, *Hic Et Nunc*. Whoever speaks, therefore, not only employs an expressive symbol but goes forth out of himself, and the word that he lets fall decides the matter. Even if

I merely say 'Good Morning' to someone I must emerge from my isolation, place myself before him and allow some proportion of my potency to pass over into his life, for good or evil."

\* \* \* \*

These four areas of concern are, of course, not exhaustive. Some would not be yours, but they seem to me to be of great importance at this moment of history. But, I would be shirking my duty if I did not take a brief look toward the future with all of its haziness and uncertainty even knowing that the Old Testament admonition to be a prophet not a soothsayer is not being heeded. I would like to tabulate and refrain from discussing in any detail several items which may be in our future. I shall not repeat the four areas I mentioned though I am sure they will persist in one way or another in the time ahead. Some observations in other areas may be appropriate in summary:

1. Although this may vary from seminary to seminary, I have observed in the past three or four years an increased interest in the local church. This is a very fluid feeling which can change from semester to semester, but there does seem to be an interest in getting out there and seeing what it is all about. Sometimes it is defiant affirmation that the local church is the concrete of the gospel bad as it may be and we might as well get out there and give it a try even if we quit later. It may be due to the lack of excitement and disillusionment of what five years ago looked like exciting bar ministries, social settlement work in the secular city, peace corps, or trying to find someone in at huge apartment houses. The writings of Browne Barr of Berkeley are suggestive here.

for he has been contending for some time that the enticing ministries outside the church lose their glamour (as well as support and nourishment) when cut off from the worshipping community. It may be dramatized in the fascinating statement of the late Ted Wedel: "Even revolutionary armies need a base of supplies." In any event, I find a renewed interest in the local church and accompanying that a renewed interest in proclamation though the forms may be more variable than previously considered.

2. The black experience is having its effect in all of the church's life and it is certainly affecting the preaching of the church. Though there may be problems with a concept such as Black Homiletics, there is none with the importance of the black preaching experience upon its white counterpart. From Martin Luther King standing in front of the Washington Monument to Jim Lawson in Memphis or Cecil Williams in San Francisco, to name only three, it is difficult to convince a black student preacher or a black congregation that preaching is defunct. Indeed, the authority of the black preacher coupled with his community leadership may be eroding in some areas, but it is still significant enough to make young blacks look seriously at the role of leadership through the church and in the pulpit. Of course, blacks, too, vary in preaching styles. Many of them, particularly in the older generation, were taught to preach white models. The younger blacks are picking up the preaching tradition of their Christian faith which did not sublimate their unique style and feelings. Many of us were schooled against our feelings, not seeing the distinction between sentiment and sentimentality; emotion and emotionalism; thus, we

tend to become vapid and sterile. The black student preacher—if he can feel comfortable in his seminary experience with whites—and if the teacher does not have a rigid pattern for all his students, can have the possibility of freeing up his white counterpart. I see this as a creative experience.

3. There is also the unclear revolution taking place in Roman Catholic Preaching. Since Vatican II and under the aegis of the Constitution on the Liturgy where the sermon is not an option but a requirement, there have been stirrings of interest in the preaching of the word and renewal in the pulpit. Of course, the fresh air blowing through the windows of the church are not as breezy as they once were and the renewal like the ecumenical movement itself may be in abeyance, but there is in the Roman seminaries a concern in proclamation that bodes possibility if not hope for Christendom in the future.

4. Finally, the form of proclamation in the future is problematical. There will be new forms and experiments certainly will continue. Balloons, guitar playing, and banners may run their course, however, if there is no word to give meaning or if aesthetics is substituted for liturgics and dogmatics. Also, mystery and awe can be lost in the determination to be together and participatory. Nevertheless, new occasions teach new duties and new ages will demand new forms. Some of us will be replaced with what may seem to us strangely equipped young men: eager of eye, bright and bushy-tailed, occupying not a chair, but perhaps a davenport; teaching not only preaching, but worship, innovative services, banner-making, small group work, and folk singing. But, *proclamation* will go on

or the endeavors will have no meaning. Thor Hall, in his book strangely critical of homiletics in the usual sense, affirms: "It is my feeling that even though the pulpit as we know it should die something new and significant would emerge to take its place." Wherever the Gospel is to be proclaimed, it is to be so. One teacher once said—in affirming the non-verbal—that he could send his wife a bunch of roses and did not need a word to symbolize his love. I am sure each could speak only for his own wife. (My wife might look for guilt.) But, I would affirm that those non-verbal roses were based on a word—a word of meaning—and they will fade quickly if not accompanied from time to time

with the word. The roses have meaning because of the word; she would take the word without the roses, but the love will die as the roses if there is no word.

Archibald MacLeish in *J.B.* has a group of people huddled together after a holocaust. A mother and child clinging together speak:

"Mother, mother, what was that?

The wind child, only the wind, only the wind

I heard a word

You heard the thunder in the wind

Under the wind there was word."

Whether in the pulpit or not, there is a *word*; that is our ministry!

# Recent New Testament Interpretation and Preaching

by FRED B. CRADDOCK

I DO NOT intend to discuss here recent trends in New Testament interpretation which may be useful for preaching or the teaching of preaching. To do so would be to accept Hans-Dieter Bastian's charge that Practical Theology in America is consumer oriented. Biblical, historical, and theological disciplines *produce*, he says; preaching and other practical disciplines *consume*.<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that in some quarters practical theologians not only lack theory and reflection, but they tend to draw from the other fields only that which can be pulled through the knothole of immediate use. But the sins of some homiletics do not make homiletics guilty.

In fact, the producer-consumer analogy hardly describes the relationship of theological (and biblical) and homiletical studies since Barth. Both Gerhard Ebeling and Heinrich Ott have clearly shown the interdependence, the mutually supportive character of this relationship.<sup>2</sup> The study of preaching moves one inevitably to the biblical text;

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the study of the biblical text is already an investigation of the preaching of the early church. Hopefully, the two recent trends in New Testament interpretation which I will discuss here will serve to illustrate that biblical studies and preaching lead into and grow out of each other. The question of which field is contributing to the other is neither clear nor important. It is, in fact, a wrong question.

## I

It is rather common today in New Testament hermeneutics to speak of the "future" of the text, or "the forward movement" of the text.<sup>3</sup> These expressions represent a shift in New Testament studies that can be seen most clearly by reviewing the brief but perceptive essay of Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Crisis of the Scripture Principle."<sup>4</sup> Pannenberg points out that at the outset of Protestant theology, biblical studies assumed that Event-Record (Text)-

<sup>1</sup> "From the Word to the Words," *Theology of the Liberating Word*, ed. Frederick Herzog (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), pp. 46-75.

<sup>2</sup> G. Ebeling, *Theology and Proclamation*, trans. John Riches (Phila.: Fortress, 1966). H. Ott, *Theology and Preaching*, trans. Harold Knight (Phila.: Westminster, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> Note, for example, Robert Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic and Word of God* (New York: Harpers, 1966), esp. pp. 124-223. Also Willi Marxsen, *The New Testament as the Church's Book*, trans. J. E. Mignard (Phila.: Fortress, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> *Basic Questions in Theology*, Vol. I, trans. G. H. Kehm (Phila.: Fortress, 1970), pp. 1-14.



Reader were a unit, a clear line of understanding without interrupting distance or discontinuity. However, the rise of critical biblical methods began to create an awareness of the distance between an event and the record of that event, and with the refining of critical tools, that distance seemed to increase. Between the record and the event are the writers who had their own purposes and responsibilities which are seen in the way the material is presented in its present form in the New Testament, especially the Gospels (Redaction criticism). The sources used by the writers reflect earlier purposes of the materials in the life and mission of the Christian community (Literary criticism). Prior to being written, the stories and sayings circulated orally in the service of worship, instruction, and evangelism (Form criticism). On the other hand, between the record and the modern reader lay the growing discipline of hermeneutics. While serving as a bridge between the text and the present situation of the reader, hermeneutics also made the reader more aware of the distance between himself and the text.

Simply sketched, Protestant theology began with this:

Event  
Record  
Reader

Then the development of critical biblical methods made us aware of this:

Event\_\_\_\_Record  
Reader

And now the increased attention to hermeneutics leaves us with this:

Event\_\_\_\_Record\_\_\_\_Reader

That the development and refinement of critical tools were vital and

necessary for serious study of the biblical texts is not to be disputed. But what was the effect of critical biblical methods on the preaching in the churches? The preacher became aware of the distance between himself and the ancient texts, but often he was lacking in either the skills or the fortitude to move through the critical disciplines necessary to negotiate that distance. As a result he either returned guiltily to a pre-seminary use of the biblical text or he had come to take the text so seriously and be so aware of the demands of an honest handling of it that he left it alone altogether. Perhaps the preacher had seen that biblical studies always moved him backward, behind the texts to sources and antecedents, while he at the same time sensed that in actuality, the story of the Gospel had always moved forward. And moreover, the preacher wanted to be a part of that story, continuing it responsibly in his own time and place in history.

Because of this strong desire to be responsible to and for the congregation before him, without any intention of being discontinuous with the biblical text or the church which brought it to him, the preacher welcomes the new angle of vision among New Testament interpreters. The critical tools are not discarded; on the contrary, they are now seen as servants of the Word. Form criticism is instructive in discovering how the church carried an event forward into a new setting. Literary criticism marks the transition of the story to written form so that it could be effective beyond the circle of those who first heard and shared. Redaction criticism reminds us of the Gospel writers' obligation to re-tell the story so that it will be the appropriate Word, the Good

News to another reader, at another time, in another place. And what is hermeneutics but the history of the church's struggle to bring forward the tradition, enthusiastically, even if sometimes awkwardly, counting each new mission frontier as the occasion for a new telling of the Gospel, a new statement of the old story?

Is not this, in fact, what the Bible itself is, a telling, a re-telling, and again a re-telling of the tradition? The Old Testament interprets itself; for example, the Exodus is repeatedly re-told to inform or challenge or encourage God's people in new situations. The Targum of the synagogue continued this process. "What is Torah? Torah is the interpretation of Torah." And the birth of the faith that Jesus was the Messiah created the need for another reading of the traditions of Israel from a new perspective. Within the Christian community new traditions arose concerning the meaning of Jesus' death, the resurrection, eschatology, the Lord's Supper, etc., but the movement of the faith into new and different cultures where no Christ was expected called for new interpretations of the message. The soil of each new situation became ingredient to the new telling and hearing of the story.

But what a dangerous responsibility! Perhaps it would be helpful to remember that inspiration does not in the history of the church refer simply to the aid of the Holy Spirit in getting the words *on* the sacred page, but also the aid of the Holy Spirit in getting them *off* again. That preacher who has accepted the sober task of continuing the interpretation of Scripture for each new situation can certainly understand why the church has at times labeled as heresy the practice of repeating without

comment the biblical text. Interpretation is not an alien imposition on the text; interpretation is what the text is. To refuse to interpret is to say prophecy has ceased, God's Word is a past word.

All this is not to say that moving forward with the text relieves the tension between the integrity of the past and the integrity of the present. Unlike existentialism which dissolves the distance between past and present, and unlike positivism which simply describes the past without regard for the present, the kind of interpretation urged here lives with that tension.<sup>5</sup> But at least the preacher can approach the text *anticipating* meaning. He can come with *interest* knowing that interest is an accepted hermeneutical principle.<sup>6</sup> With André Gide, he holds "that the best explanation of a work must be its sequel."<sup>7</sup> In this sense the sermon does not simply look back to the text; it fulfills the text.

We might pause here to say that if this present direction in New Testament hermeneutics continues, we can expect in the next few years some most helpful investigation in two areas not yet fully explored.

(1) The work of the Christian prophet. The prophet in the early church took what Jesus *said* and interpreted it to the church in a given situation in the form of "the Lord *says*." The burden of the prophet was this movement forward of the message from one setting to another, addressing the situation before him but without loss of the intent of the tradition he received. Who was this prophet?

<sup>5</sup> Peter Hodgson, *Jesus-Word and Presence* (Phila.: Fortress, 1971), pp. 31-48.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-39.

<sup>7</sup> As quoted in William Doty, *Contemporary N.T. Interpretation* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 85-86.

What were his credentials? What New Testament "words of the Lord" were delivered by the prophet? Is the preacher his successor today? These and other questions need exploration.

(2) The formation of the Christian canon. We know that in both oral and written traditions the Christian story moved forward, being spoken and heard anew on expanding frontiers. But when, for a number of reasons, the church determined that twenty-seven of the many documents in circulation were the official canon, the Scripture of the church, the norm for faith and life, what effects did this have on the forward movement of the texts? Did this mean the process was to cease, that the moving tradition was frozen at one point in history, that all subsequent preaching and teaching was to look back, quietly regretting being born too late to share in the lively times? To canonize meant, for many Christians to enshrine, and shrines have negative as well as positive effects upon us. To canonize certain writings was to underline them, to say to everyone that these are the significant words. Did you ever receive a book from a friend who had already underlined portions of it, in effect telling you what was and what was not important? How did you react? Of course, these comments are not to quarrel with the church nor to try to open a case historically closed. The canon is my canon. But as a preacher must I not keep the canon theologically open if I am responsible in the awesome yet thrilling task of continuing the forward movement of the text? We anticipate more scholarly work in what may be called "canon criticism."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> James Sanders and Hans von Campenhausen are at work in this area.

## II

A second trend in New Testament interpretation which is, or can be, fruitfully related to preaching is that of positioning oneself to *overhear* rather than to *hear* the text.

It should be said at the outset that I do not intend to minimize the values of directly hearing a text. It was a major victory for the church and for preaching when the hold of the history-of-religion school upon New Testament scholarship was broken. The face of the text was turned toward us by Barth and Bultmann and others. We entered into a period of existential interpretation and confrontational theology which refreshed study and enlivened preaching. The Word of God was again *Address*, address to us.

But as Amos Wilder has reminded us,<sup>9</sup> the Word of God is more than address just as I am more than volition. Salvation is multidimensional, just as life is, and hence the relation of the text and the listener is more than one of confrontation and decision. While some texts are confrontational by nature, many are not. In fact, it is more appropriate to some texts to overhear them rather than to hear them.<sup>10</sup>

Consider, for example, the two types

<sup>9</sup> "The Word as Address and the Word as Meaning," *The New Hermeneutic. New Frontiers in Theology*, Vol. II. Eds. James Robinson and John Cobb (New York: Harpers, 1964), pp. 198-218.

<sup>10</sup> While he has not used the term "overhear" E. Kasemann has put the reader of the N.T. in that posture by his studies which seek to reconstruct early church life by analyzing the N.T. texts in terms of polemics. The basic polemic is not between the text and the reader but between two parties within the text, such as Enthusiasts and Early Catholics.

of apostolic ministry presented to the Corinthian church as reflected in 2 Cor. 10-13. Into the Corinthian congregations came certain "superlative apostles" who had strong letters of recommendation and who underscored their ministry with wondrous deeds and mighty works. Such men turned many heads. On the other hand, there was the founding father, Paul. His letters of recommendation? The Corinthian Christians themselves. His boast of mighty works? His boast was what he suffered, what he had endured, his weaknesses through which God's strength was perfected. The Corinthians must decide what constitutes authentic apostolic ministry. The reader would do well not to jump into this text hastily, defending Paul or scourging the Corinthians. Stand back and listen to both sides; weigh the issues; be drawn in slowly, only after reviewing the nature of Christian ministry and the ways of God in the world. The parties in Corinth are addressing each other; we are in the perfect position to overhear.

Or read the Gospel of Mark as Theodore Weeden has asked us to read it,<sup>11</sup> as a dramatic presentation of two Christologies. Jesus repeatedly presents the Messiah who serves and suffers; his unperceptive and misunderstanding disciples insist upon his being the Divine Man who works wonders and overcomes all obstacles before him. Even casual readers of Mark have seen in the Gospel this double image of the Christ. Two traditions are in conflict from very early times. The reader or listener who will draw near enough to overhear will find himself re-evaluating his own image of the Christ and hence

his own understanding of discipleship. Overhearing becomes hearing.

It takes little imagination to see how profoundly significant could be an occasion of overhearing Jesus and the Pharisees involved in a polemic over forgiveness, or eating with sinners, or fasting, or keeping the Sabbath, or writing a bill of divorce. Whoever rushes in to *hear* the text may find himself hastily identifying with Jesus and caricaturing the Pharisees, making it impossible really to hear either Jesus or the Pharisees. Tarry long enough to overhear the conversation and get the issues in mind clearly.

Passages that lend themselves to overhearing are not only those that involve polemic. One can with great profit overhear the conversation between the father and his younger son or his older son in the parable of Luke 15. Or a few hours spent in uninvolved overhearing the relationship between Paul and the Philippians can result in more meaningful involvement not just in the text but in one's own relationships in Christ.

It must be admitted that the posture of overhearing a text can be a new term for the old history-of-religions approach with its objectivity, its pure description of what once was, its total lack of advocacy. This can serve as a sophisticated and widely respected way out for one who wishes not to be a preacher but who must discuss the Bible in public. However, for him who is a preacher, overhearing the text holds real possibilities. Everyone here has already reflected on the advantages of overhearing from the standpoint of pure listener interest. Overhearing a comment is always more interesting than hearing one. But far deeper than the concern for creating interest in what is being said

<sup>11</sup> Mark, *Traditions in Conflict* (Phila.: Fortress, 1972).



lie several reasons why the preacher could well join the New Testament scholar in overhearing the text.

In the first place, overhearing has the same advantages of attending a play: the listener is permitted to hear the responsibility for his own participation. Interest is evoked; one finds himself drawn into the action and issues; discoveries about oneself and identifications are made. The air is not filled with ought, must, and should and yet imperatives are felt and they cannot be shaken when the curtain falls. In a real sense, permission to draw conclusions about life is a demand to do so.

In the second place, overhearing is non-threatening. Under threatening conditions one does not think, listen, ponder, reflect, or decide because all the faculties are lined up along the barricades in anxious defense. When overhearing the text rather than having it confront him like a javelin, the listener is set free to think, to feel, to resolve. Of course, such handling of the text calls for trust in the power of the material to effect change in the listener. The only way to avoid that risk is to build the listener's response into the message by offering no alternative, but it is the possibility of a No that makes the Yes a real Yes.

Thirdly, overhearing the text can be a more honest handling of the Scriptures. Sometimes the desire to have the text confront the hearers results in a sacrifice of the integrity of the Scriptures in their own historical pastness. Overhearing Jesus converse with the rich ruler allows those with ears to hear the message without resorting to the questionable practice of taking Jesus' words to the ruler and transferring them

uncritically to the entire congregation. And listening to Jesus in debate with Pharisees is to be preferred over the practice of the preacher taking the role of Jesus and treating his hearers as the Pharisees. In fact, the posture of overhearing is more likely to effect the *minister's own* hearing of the text than is the rather common practice of *using* the text to address the congregation.

Finally, overhearing the text can be very persuasive. It may not seem so at first because of the absence of a frontal and direct approach to the hearer. But ours is a generation reared and educated on the inductive processes of John Dewey: we arrive at conclusions, we do not accept them at the outset. The experience of overhearing permits induction, and hearer-initiated participation. No approach to preaching could be more appropriate to the concept of the priesthood of all believers; that is, each person is responsible for his own faith. Was not this part of the persuasive dynamics at work when Augustine overheard a child reading Romans 13 or when Wesley overheard the reading of Luther's commentary on Romans at Aldersgate?

We may again recall the disarming power of the parable. One begins listening to a story about someone else, somewhere else. The listener is in a sense overhearing; he is not being confronted or addressed. At the end of the parable, however, the listener finds himself among the characters of the story, so inextricably involved that he is not released from it by a benediction, a handshake, and a walk across the parking lot.

In overhearing we hear, because we are free to listen.

# An Experiment in Innovative Preaching

by JOHN R. BROKHOFF

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IN the Fall of 1972 Emory University's Candler School of Theology granted the writer a sabbatical leave to conduct an experiment in innovative preaching. A sabbatical is usually spent in further study at another academic institution. It may call for an explanation why a professor would spend his sabbatical in the parish.

Today the effectiveness of traditional preaching is being seriously questioned. On many sides we hear it said that the sermon is dead. Preaching, they say, is walking on the plank. A Seminary president claims, "Preaching has gone to pot." One minister expresses his view, "Preaching is the occupational hazard of the ministry." Modern-day prophets claim that the church of tomorrow will be a "congregation without a pulpit." Is that really the case with preaching today? If so, are there new forms of preaching that would be more appealing and effective? This called for an experiment to test new forms of preaching.

The world is changing and the church is trying to change with it. In *Future Shock*, Toffler writes, "Western society for the past 300 years has been caught up in a fire storm of change. This storm, far from abating, now appears to be gathering force. Change sweeps through the highly industrialized countries with waves of ever accelerating speed and unprecedented impact." The change is not at the rate of  $10 + 10$ , nor  $10 \times 10$ , but  $10^{10}$ , 10 raised to the 10th power. To be relevant the church in recent years has been engaged in making changes. Several denominations have made radical changes in organizational structure. In church architecture the traditional Gothic and Colonial have given way to forms that are so radical that there is often difficulty in recognizing the building as a church. Year after year there come from the presses new translations of the Bible. Experimental forms of worship are in vogue. Churches are revising their lectionaries. Women are being admitted to the Ministry. The Rite of Confirmation, for some churches, has become optional. Laymen are being used as worship leaders and readers. But, very little, if anything, is being produced in new forms of preaching. It seems as though everything in the church has changed except the style of preaching. An experiment in preaching was needed to learn new ways of proclaiming the Gospel.

One of the challenges of a Seminary professor is to make his teaching relevant to the times and needs of the parish and world where students will shortly be serving. After seven or more years in the classroom surrounded by a totally academic atmosphere, it is easy to lose contact with what is actually going on in

the world and church. Yet, in a few years students will be going to this world and church to deal with the problems and meet the needs of people. Students complain that some courses are not relevant. After graduation, they file away their class notes not to be referred to again, except on rare occasions. If this is the case, we need to be reminded that the Seminary is to be a servant of the church by providing the church with enlightened, consecrated, dedicated, and professional leadership. If courses are not relevant, the Seminary is failing in its primary obligation to the church which makes the very existence of the Seminary possible. Moreover, a professor needs to teach from the stance of experience. In the practical fields, he needs to be able to say, "This works because I have tried it and I know." If a course in new forms of preaching is offered, the professor needs experience in the performance of these forms. A course of this nature is now in demand by Seminary graduates. In a recent study of three Seminaries, the 1971 and 1961 classes expressed a desire for a course in experimental preaching. The rate of request ranged from 22 to 26%, one of the three highest requests made for improvement in the field of Homiletics. This experiment in preaching provided a needed experience for this professor.

The experiment was not only to give the professor experience in preaching new types of sermons for his own education, but to learn as far as possible the effectiveness of the new forms. It is obvious that a new form is not necessarily better than an old form simply because it is new. How can one tell whether a new kind of sermon is more effective? This calls for practical experience within an average congregation and instruments to determine the results.

### *The Setting*

The experiment took place in St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Clearwater, Florida. Clearwater is a city of 52,074 which had a 52% increase in population since 1960. St. Paul's is a congregation of the Lutheran Church in America. Her present pastor is the Rev. Richard M. Hollinger who has served here for 8 years. The congregation consists of 1,048 baptized members. 48% of them are over age 50. Many of these are retired folks who moved to Clearwater from northern states for a warmer climate. The 1973 budget calls for \$106,310.00. In addition to the pastor, the church staff includes an associate pastor, secretary, director of music, sexton and a part-time superintendent of buildings. The congregation is only 17 years old and is housed in a new church building costing about \$600,000.00. Two morning services are held each Sunday with an average attendance above 600. The congregation offers a full program of church activities for her members, supports the church-at-large with gifts exceeding that of any other congregation in the Synod, offers its facilities to the community for non-church activities, and supports independently an overseas missionary stationed in Hong Kong. This congregation offered herself as a laboratory for the experiment in preaching. With the encouragement and full support of the pastor, the members readily and enthusiastically engaged in the various aspects of the experiment feeling that they were making a contribution to the future training of ministers.

*Guidelines*

The experiment in preaching was conducted within certain guidelines. This was not to be a far-out project but one within the context of the congregation. The purpose of limiting the experiment to the congregation at hand was to learn whether new forms of preaching could be offered within an average congregation.

First, the experiment was placed within the congregation's liturgical heritage. The Lutheran church is a liturgical church using the ancient liturgy of the Christian church, church year, and lectionary. The new types of sermons had to be presented within the framework of the liturgical order of worship. This meant that the worship service could not be revised or re-arranged to suit the sermon. The sermon had to be an integral part of the traditional service. This involved the church year, the season of the church year (Trinity, Advent), and the day of the season with its own theme. The sermon for the day had to correspond to the theme of the particular Sunday. This involved also the Lectionary, for the congregation, as per custom in Lutheran churches, heard the three pericopes read each Sunday according to the traditional lectionary revised by Luther. The text for the day's sermon was therefore usually taken from one of the passages prescribed for the day.

Second, the innovative sermons were presented within the context of Biblical preaching. The plan was to present the Word of God to the people in different forms. This called for Biblical preaching which involved the use of a text. This text was to be used not only as a resource but as the source of the truth of the message. It was the deeply held conviction of the preacher in the experiment that the messages should be evangelical. The Gospel was to be preached according to the Scriptures. It was a matter of old wine in new wineskins, not new wine in new wineskins. The forms were to be new but the content was to be as old as the Bible. We were interested in the Gospel, not in gimmicks such as a preacher's removing his beard while in the pulpit. We wanted not fads in preaching but the fundamentals. We were not trying to be different for the sake of being different, but to be different for the Gospel's sake, in the hope that people might be touched who otherwise would not be impressed.

Third, the experiment was placed within the framework of the local congregation. There was the program of the local church. For instance, the Finance Committee requested the preacher to deliver a sermon on the stewardship of possessions because it was an annual custom to hear such a sermon in preparation for the annual campaign for funds for the coming year's budget. In addition, there was the physical circumstances of the place of preaching. The church building had to be accepted as it was without making any radical changes: stationary pews, divided chancel, daytime brightness which did not allow the use of visual aids such as slides or movies. There was the fact of the size of the attendance: approximately 200 at the early service and about 400 or more at the later service. The new methods had to take these circumstances into consideration. The method had to adjust to the situation. The intention was not to make any changes but to accept the situation as it existed.



Fourth, the experiment was planned in terms of modern methods of communication. There was a serious and earnest attempt to use the new forms of communication as often as possible to test their practicality and effectiveness. One of these new emphases in communication is the use of the visual and pictorial. Modern man gets his messages primarily through pictures, especially TV. The experiment took advantage of this emphasis by the use of objects (bread, cup, yoke). Another theory of modern communications is directness. This item was used by coming out of the pulpit and taking a position on a stool located in the central aisle of the nave, and by preaching without notes of any kind. McLuhan is well known for this phrase, "The medium is the message." The form communicates as well as the content. The experiment used this device by preaching one time from the altar rather than in the pulpit, by role-playing the part of Jacob, and dressing in street clothes rather than in the customary vestments for an informal dialogue seated on living room chairs in front of the altar. Participation of the listeners is an important emphasis in modern communication theory. The congregation was involved in this experiment by having members react to the sermon while the sermon was preached, by holding a dialogue with the congregation during the sermon period, by having the congregation share in the sermon by singing, clapping and dancing. Young people, choirs, children, and a soloist had parts in the sermons of the experiment. Moreover, feedback is considered an essential part of effective communication. This method was used in the experiment by asking worshippers each Sunday to fill in a response form. Almost 3000 of these forms were received, tallied and studied to learn the effectiveness of each sermon. After the services members were given an opportunity to react orally to the sermon in talk-back sessions in the parish hall. Feedback was received in the pre-service sermon seminars held on Sunday nights prior to the Sunday when the sermon was to be preached.

### *Nature of the Experiment*

The experiment had three parts. One was the pre-service aspect of the experiment. On Sunday evenings a group of 20 members of the congregation met with the preacher for an hour to consider the sermon for the coming Sunday. Among the 20 were youths, housewives, students, retired and professional persons. It was not the purpose of this group to advise the preacher what he was to say next Sunday. It was believed that a sermon is a message from God through his called and appointed herald. He alone is responsible for the message presented on a Sunday morning. But, the pre-service sessions are helpful, it was found, to the preacher because the discussions give him an understanding of the problems, needs and questions of these people who more or less represent the entire congregation. As preacher and laymen study the pericopes for the coming Sunday, new insights are received. In addition, these pre-service seminars are beneficial to the laymen. Because of their study of the passages, they approach the sermon's text with depth and greater understanding. The seminars cause the people to look forward to next Sunday's sermon with anticipation and curiosity how the preacher will

develop the theme and present the ideas discussed in the seminar. They feel a part of the sermon and this in turn encourages church attendance and involvement.

The second aspect of the experiment was the in-service performance. During the worship services the new forms of preaching were presented. Each Sunday a different form was used. There was never a repeat of one particular form. This part of the experiment was a new experience for most of the worshippers. They wondered what was coming. Some were shocked, others surprised, a few turned off. It was also a new and exciting experience for the preacher. He wondered how the message would be received. Not having tried this method, he was not sure he could do it effectively. He had nightmares of falling flat on his face. This sense of insecurity was probably communicated by giving an impression of the preacher's lack of certainty and authority.

The third part of the experiment was the post-service aspect. It was the period for response and reaction. The people were asked to evaluate what they heard and saw. This was done by a weekly response sheet on which they indicated their reaction to 10 different aspects of the sermon. In addition, talk-back sessions were held immediately after the service in the parish hall. Interested people met with the preacher for a discussion of the sermon. These sessions were not held to encourage people to think the sermon was just another man's opinion. If the sermon is God's Word, then it needs to be believed, accepted and obeyed. However, the post-service talk-back sessions serve a need by allowing people to raise questions, seek clarification of points raised in the sermon, and to show the preacher by their comments and reactions how well he communicated.

### *New Style Sermons*

The experiment consisted of 9 innovative and one traditional sermon beginning with the first Sunday in October, 1972.

1. "A Dinner of Bread Only" was a Communion meditation for worldwide communion Sunday. It was preached at the altar to call attention to the Sacrament of the Altar and to the bread on the altar. A loaf of bread was used as an object around which the sermon was built.

2. "Change of Life" was a monologue on the life of Jacob, based on the Old Testament Lesson for the Day. The new technique used here was role-playing. It proved to be one of the most popular of the series.

3. "Worship: Agony of Ecstasy?" was presented by the experimenter's wife, an ordained Methodist minister. The experimenter had a previous preaching engagement. A woman preacher was used because 99% of the congregation had never heard a woman preacher. While the content and mode of her sermon were traditional, the person of the preacher was innovative. The response sheets indicated that the sex of the preacher is forgotten when the congregation becomes involved and impressed with the proclamation of the Word.

4. "Join the Jesus Party" dealt with the upcoming national elections. Young people of the parish served as members of both political parties. During the introduction of the sermon, one group with pictures and banners came down the center

aisle singing along with the choir, "God Bless America." A similar party of demonstrators came down later for the opposing party, singing, "Your Land is My Land." As a part of the conclusion of the sermon, both groups marched down the side aisles singing with the choir, "Onward Christian Soldiers," and returned down the center aisle with pictures, signs and banners promoting the Jesus Party. Upon entering the chancel, the demonstrators put down their signs, knelt on the altar stairs, with hands reaching up toward the cross, and sang the last stanza of "America."

5. "Conversation on Liberation" was a dialogue sermon on Reformation Sunday. The experimenter and his wife were dressed in street clothes, seated on living-room chairs in front of the altar to give a living-room scene and an informal dialogue. The lady was against Women's Lib and the man was for it. There was a meeting of minds in Christ symbolized by their placing around their necks an oxen yoke to communicate that man and woman are equal partners in their obedience to Christ.

6. "Lift up Your Cup" was another communion meditation for the customary first-Sunday-of-the-month Communion in this local congregation. This sermon used an empty cup to represent our empty lives. At the close of the sermon, the preacher stepped down from the pulpit and asked a lady in the pews to take the cup to the altar for Christ to fill it with life. She came forward, knelt on an altar step, and sang, "Fill my Cup, Lord."

7. "The Church's Dirty Five-Letter Word" was the requested "money sermon." Because the subject was open to discussion and disagreement among the laity, it was decided to ask six people at each service to come prepared to interrupt the sermon at any point where there might be a disagreement or a question. The reactors did not know what the preacher would say. Not only did the reactors interrupt but in addition, other worshippers took part.

8. "Be Merry, for Tomorrow We Live" was a sermon that emphasized the joy of the coming of the Lord according to the Lectionary for the Day. In the course of the sermon the preacher asked the people to express their joy by singing and clapping. Since the conditions would not allow dancing by the congregation, three couples were asked to come to the chancel and dance to the tune of "Put Your Hand in the Hand of the Man of Galilee." The music was furnished by a recording.

9. "All You Wanted to Know about the Hereafter but Were Afraid . . ." dealt with the second coming of Christ, the theme of the lessons for the Day. While in the pulpit, the preacher explained the text (the epistle for the day), and introduced the subject. Then he left the pulpit and sat on a high stool located in the center aisle close to the front pew. He opened up the subject to the worshippers for their comment. It was a case of having the congregation preach the sermon.

10. The final sermon was a traditional Communion meditation dealing with the first Sunday in Advent. It was felt that the congregation should hear at least one traditional sermon in the series. The response form for this Sunday covered all previous nine sermons to get an over-all evaluation of the project.

*New Forms*

It is not only a problem for a preacher what to say but how to say it. A popular folk hymn says, "Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born." But how tell it? In what form?

In recent years we have been talking about new forms of preaching, but there is nothing really new about using different forms. There is Biblical justification of the use of innovative preaching. The Prophets used new, radical forms to shock and surprise the people to get God's message across to the people. Ahijah (I Kings 11:29f) tore his garment into twelve pieces to get a message across to Jeroboam. Isaiah drew up a tablet with a name on it (Isa. 8:1-4) and went around naked (Isa. 20:1f). Jeremiah broke a flask, wore a yoke, and bought a field (Jer. 19, 27, 32). Ezekiel (Eze. 24:15-27) was ordered by God not to mourn the passing of his wife. It is important to realize that these new forms of preaching were not ends in themselves. The act was symbolic, a message in itself. Ahijah was saying that Israel would be torn apart. Isaiah went naked to preach that Israel, like naked prisoners, would be taken into captivity. Jeremiah broke the flask to say that God would destroy Israel. He wore a yoke to say that only those who submitted to Nebuchadnezzar would live. He bought a field to teach that some day Israel would be restored as a nation. Ezekiel was not to mourn for his beloved wife. When the people came and asked, "Why are you acting in this way?", he answered that there would be no mourners to mourn the destruction of the temple.

There is also psychological justification for using new forms. Different types of sermons bring variety to the diet of sermons. People want and need something new. There is a freshness about it. If the same thing is said in the same way with the same tone and speed, there is naturally boredom and listlessness. This factor was brought out by comments on the response forms: "A refreshing change, such radiant joy!" "Any new approach to the Word brings new insights to the age-old message"; "I feel that too much rigidity tends to stagnate my emotions and reception, if I hear the same thing done in the same way every Sunday"; and "I'm very much in favor of innovative preaching because as we involve more of our senses, the Word becomes more a part of us."

It is logical that different forms are used for sermons. The subject matter should suggest or choose a form which suits it. One does not take a new technique and impose it on a "regular" sermon, but one allows that subject to suggest a form that will best communicate the message.

The experiment proved that new forms of preaching are helpful in getting across the Word. To the statement on the response form "The innovative aspect helped me get the message," 68% said "Yes," 17% said "somewhat," and 15% said "No." 76% of the respondents claimed that the new methods did not detract from the delivery of the sermons.

While this may be the case, it needs to be remembered that there is a tendency in the use of new forms of preaching that for some the forms can be nothing more than entertainment. This is a violation of the principle that forms are not ends in themselves but should be only means to an end. This was the case with



the Prophets; their radical methods conveyed a message. In addition, these new forms may, at least for some worshippers, constitute a distraction. The experiment showed that this danger must always be kept in mind lest the new forms detract from the message. If they do, then the form and the content are bitter enemies. Further, it was discovered that the effectiveness of a new form depends largely upon the ability of the preacher to handle the new form. Preaching in a particular way may not be his "thing." He may not have the talent for it, such as leading the congregation in singing as a part of the sermon. He may not have a knack for the dramatic. He may become self-conscious as he tries to perform role-playing. It seems therefore, that a preacher is limited in his use of new forms by his own talents. In addition, the experiment pointed to the fact that the acceptability of a method by the worshippers depends often upon the subject matter of the sermon. If the subject is of no interest or is offensive, the new method will be criticized. This happened in the experiment with the dialogue sermon on women's liberation. It happened that many found the subject offensive not only for itself but for the Sunday, Reformation Sunday, on which it was presented. When the subject was not controversial, the sermon dialogue in other congregations was warmly and appreciately received.

Perhaps it will not be good news to those preachers who look at the new forms of preaching as an easy way out of preparing next Sunday's sermon. Some consider the new forms as a "cop-out," a way of avoiding sermon preparation. The experiment proved that almost double time is necessary for the preparation of a new form of preaching. If it takes a minimum of 20 hours to adequately prepare a traditional sermon, it will take many more hours to work out the details, to spend more time in contemplation for the sake of creativity, and to make the necessary purchases of objects to be used and to rehearse with those having a part in the innovative sermon. Because of the time element, it is not practical for a parish pastor to attempt a new form of sermon each Sunday even if the people wanted it.

As can be guessed, the experiment showed that some forms were more effective than others. Forms that disturbed the traditional worship service in terms of reverence and dignity were offensive to many. The forms used in the experiment that allowed the people to vicariously participate in the sermon were best received. For the most part they liked the use of objects and choirs. They were moved by the solo at the end of a sermon. Tears came to their eyes when the youth with outstretched arms to the cross prayed for God's blessing upon the nation. One of the most popular sermons was the role-playing of Jacob. The forms most detested were those involving the people as preachers of the sermon. The majority did not care for the reactors interrupting the sermon and giving their own views on the subject. The least effective method was the dialogue with the congregation on the Second Coming. People do not come to church to hear what laymen have to say on the subject. The average man feels that the speaker's opinion is no better than his. If a sermon, they think, can be presented by a man in the pew on the spur of the moment, why does a pastor have to spend hours of preparation in prayer, solitude, meditation, and study to get a message from God? This does

not say or imply that God cannot speak to the average layman in the pew, but it is much more probable that God will speak to the one who has been called to preach and has spent many hours in the discipline of study, prayer and meditation.

### *Reactions*

What effect did these new-form sermons have upon this congregation, St. Paul's Lutheran? Did they regret or rejoice that they agreed to be the laboratory for the experiment?

At the end of the series, Pastor Richard Hollinger wrote his evaluation:

"I think that this experiment taught all of us that the Gospel and its implication for modern man can be communicated to a congregation through a form other than the traditional sermon . . . and that these other forms can be far more effective than the traditional sermon. I think we also discovered that certain forms are more effective than others. If these presentations are Gospel-centered, are done in good taste, and end on a good note, the majority of listeners will not only be impressed but spiritually moved by what they hear. . . . It is my intention to utilize these forms in St. Paul's Church in the months to come. I feel that these forms interspersed in our traditional sermon presentations will be refreshing and of spiritual value to the congregation. I would certainly recommend that pastors gather their courage and give a worshipping congregation occasionally something different from the traditional sermon. . . . Our experiment in preaching was successful. It was a valuable aid to St. Paul's congregation. Lessons were learned. Adverse reactions were so minimal that they did not have harmful effect upon the congregation. In fact, our congregation stewardship program took place during this experiment and our membership pledged 22% more than it did in 1971."

This reaction and evaluation came from the lay president of the congregation: "It has been a great privilege for St. Paul's to be involved in your experimental preaching program. I have spoken to many in our congregation and the consensus has been most complimentary. We have gained in understanding Christ's Word."

How did the people in the pew feel about the experiment? 17% of those submitting response sheets indicated that in their opinion the experiment had a negative effect on the congregation. 7% said they were definitely turned off by the innovative sermons. As might be expected, there were those who did not appreciate the new forms of preaching. Some people are against all change, no matter what it is. It was interesting that the age group, ages 25-35, were least amenable to the new sermons. Before the experiment it was believed that the above 50 group would be loudest in protest. The age groups most favorable to innovation were the group between 12 and 24, and the large group in the above 50 bracket. Since the reports each week did not ask for names, people were frank about their reaction. On the reports were expressions like these:

"Would appeal to Boob Tube watchers."

"Infantile."

"Too radical for church services."

"Bad, bad, bad."

"Only one more Sunday, thank God!"

"This was ridiculous."

"I was glad when it was over."

"If I had submitted such a sermon, the congregation would have kicked me out of the church" (a retired pastor).

"It may give our pastor a rest from preaching, but I still like the old way of hearing our sermons. That's why we pay him, to conform with our wishes."

For the vast majority the experiment was favorably received and appreciated. This was borne out by the facts of the response sheets. 87% indicated that the experiment was beneficial to the congregation. 10% wanted the new type sermon every Sunday while 87% wanted innovative sermons occasionally. 33% considered the sermons of the series helpful and 60% indicated they were interested in the sermons. The favorable reaction was strengthened by these facts:

25% said the innovative sermons were more interesting than the traditional type.  
43% claimed that the new approach and method gave a fresh insight into the Gospel.

25% said the experimental sermons made them look forward to next Sunday's sermon.

23% were released from the "same old thing" rut of hearing a sermon.

43% said the new forms matched our changing world.

40% indicated that the new type sermons made the Gospel fresh, alive, exciting.

The following comments were added to the report forms:

"Variety of methods creates interest."

"It was an experience of ecstasy!"

"I felt as though Christ was speaking directly."

"I love participating—singing and clapping."

"Opened up a lot of discussion outside of church."

"We need this in more churches, especially for the younger generation" (college professor).

"The project was like a blood transfusion."

"Involvement is the key! Participating in the experiment has made people aware of a dynamic church."

"To me the series was a real blessing. My life has completely changed."

"The sermons gave me an insight into myself which I haven't seen in quite a few years."

In summary, the positive values of the experimental sermons were these:

(1) This type sermon appeals greatly to youth.

(2) It indicated that the church was changing with the times.

- (3) There was experienced the joy of participation.
- (4) Some had a closer relationship with God.
- (5) There was a new insight into the gospel and self.
- (6) The new forms gave some a new attitude toward church attendance.
- (7) The sermons aroused discussion during the following week.
- (8) Lives were changed.

### *Lessons Learned*

The experiment was very definitely a learning experience, lessons that probably could not have been learned from books, for these are the lessons that are learned only from experience in the field among God's people and the world.

First, this professor learned that contrary to what many are saying today the sermon is not dead. In the local congregation preaching is still the primary function of the ministry. Preaching is the hub of the church's wheel. Through preaching people are led, guided, counselled, stimulated, comforted and saved. People still come to church primarily for preaching. In liturgical services the liturgy may become largely rote because of continuous repetition. People do not come to church for fellowship primarily because they can get it at the club or the lounge. They do not come for entertainment through sermons, music, or pageants. They get their entertainment at home via TV. They come primarily to hear the Word of God. They want a message from God for their daily lives. One pastor put it this way, "Your people will put up with almost anything all through the week if the sermon was good." In a time when preaching is an elective in the Seminary curriculum or, if required, the number of hours has been drastically reduced, this raises the question whether our seminaries are missing the boat in preparing men for parish ministry. The trouble is not with preaching as a method of communication, but with the poor quality of preaching heard in these days. People in the parish are hungry for good preaching, preaching that brings a message from God for their daily lives. For a while most Christians will tolerate poor preaching because they are faithful to the church, but in due time, little by little, they will stop coming to church. This affects their faith, their lives, and their support of the church. Consequently, the church declines in its influence, finances, membership, and ability to help the needy of the world. Once more the church's seminaries need to become schools of prophets. If the church's educational leaders think preaching is not important in today's parish, it proves they are not listening to the man in the pew.

A second lesson learned from the experiment is humility for the preacher. This lesson was learned from a study of the almost 3000 "response forms" submitted by the listeners over a period of 10 weeks. Because the responses were anonymous, the reactions were very honest and frank. For the writer, this was the first time in more than 30 years of preaching that the people indicated their evaluation of his preaching. Like most, he received oral comments at the close of each service. People invariably had something good to say about the sermon. The negative reaction was usually ignored as coming from a crank or a disaf-



fected member of the church. When a preacher hears nothing but complimentary remarks Sunday after Sunday, year after year, he begins to believe what they say about him and his sermons. This makes him rather proud and causes him to think that his preaching is at least above average. It would do every preacher a world of good for his own humility to allow his people to respond anonymously to his sermons over a period of time. The experiment indicated that the sermons held the interest of 87%. 89% were able to get the main points of the sermon. 81% considered the delivery of the sermons satisfactory. 78% felt that the sermons were relevant to life today. All of this is good and one can be grateful for this positive response. But, when it comes to the real nitty-gritty of the sermon, there is cause for humility. Only 57% indicated they learned something new in each sermon, only 54% were moved to express their faith in daily living, only 50% heard God speaking as the Bible was proclaimed, only 53% said they renewed their commitment to Jesus. In the experiment, the preacher helped, persuaded, and moved just about half of the congregation. That is good cause for humility. It makes one want to try harder.

Third, the experiment taught that people today want variety in their sermons. St. Paul's congregation indicated that 10% would like innovative sermons every Sunday, 87% occasionally, and 3% never. This is a mandate to a preacher to deliver sermons that are not the same Sunday after Sunday. People are tired of the same old way. They want something new and different, something fresh and alive. It is a fact that if something is said over and over again in the same way with the same speed, style and tone of voice, there comes a time when nobody is listening. Yet, the experiment taught that it is not desirable to have an innovative sermon each Sunday. This in time would result in having the innovative become the traditional. Moreover, the preacher could not afford the double time it takes to get up a new-type sermon each week. It needs to be remembered that about 10% of the congregation will dislike the innovative sermon, but if the sermon comes about once a month, they will be able to take it without leaving the church. Too much spice is intolerable. A little salt is all that is needed. So it is with preaching innovative sermons. A vast majority of the people would welcome an occasional innovative sermon.

While the above is true, a fourth lesson gained from this experiment is of extreme importance for the preacher. It was discovered that the effectiveness of a sermon does not depend primarily upon the method used. One of the most erudite comments on the report forms expressed it beautifully: "While innovation is helpful, it will never replace good preaching. Well-prepared sermons, simple, direct delivery, sincerity. All the innovation we can think of will not mask dull and uninteresting preaching." This reactor is pointing to the truth that preaching is more than a method of communication. While the method is important, effective preaching depends more upon the message and the messenger. Without these, innovative methods can only distract, offend, and at best hold interest. Then the technique becomes the center of attention, an end in itself rather than a means to an end. This says something very, very important: there is

nothing basically wrong with the traditional sermon. The trouble lies with the message and the messenger giving the traditional sermon. As stated above, the innovative sermon is needed to give spice to the weekly meal of heavenly Bread. Our problem in preaching in our times is the lack of a message. A majority of contemporary sermons can be classified as topical, that is, non-biblical. They are based upon a current event or a personal experience or observation of the preacher. It is a man giving his opinion about life and the world. It is talk about religion, God, and the good life. But, this is not the Biblical understanding of preaching. A sermon is God speaking through a man to mankind. It is the proclamation of the Word of God. This Word is recorded in the Scriptures. For preaching to be true preaching, the message of the sermon must come directly and specifically from the Bible as the source of the message. This involves theology, because theology is an understanding and interpretation of divine truth. The crisis in today's preaching is the crisis we have suffered in contemporary theology beginning with Bonhoeffer's religionless Christianity to Bultmann's existentialism and ending with Altizer's death of God. Preaching will never make an impact upon the church and world until it re-discovers the evangelical truth of the Bible and formulated in the ecumenical creeds of the universal church.

More important than the method or technique of preaching is the messenger. Even in experimental preaching, the success of preaching depends largely upon the spirit and attitude of the preacher. He must believe in preaching as God's means of saving the world. He will never communicate with any or every type of communication unless he believes what he says and lives it every day. This calls for deep convictions concerning the teachings of the Bible. It means that the messenger must live under the positive conviction that he is called of God to preach. He must feel a divine necessity to preach. Regardless of his technique, the preacher will not get across unless he is totally sincere, dedicated and consecrated to Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior.

In this consideration of what makes a sermon effective, it must not be overlooked that the congregation is a vital partner in preaching. The people have a part in the communicative process. The congregation needs to have open minds and hearts for the message of the day. The best preacher in the world, even Jesus, cannot communicate unless the people are willing to listen. This is one of our problems in today's church. People have not been taught to listen to a sermon. To get the most from a sermon calls for discipline, attentiveness, empathy, and faith. As it is a problem today, it has always been a problem. The author of Hebrews faced it, too: "For good news came to us just as to them; but the message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers."

The experiment is over. The local pastor returns to his pulpit and the professor goes back to his classes. Will any good come of it? Shall we go back to our old ways of preaching? This must have been the concern of one of the members of St. Paul's church, for on the last day of the experiment, she handed to her pastor a poem as a kind of a joke:

*A Pastorale Poem*

Gone is the laugh, the smile, the grin;  
 Gone is the "fun" way to hear about sin.  
 Gone are the days when performance was rated—  
 No longer will back-talk be tolerated!!  
 No more sharing in sermon-making. . . .  
 To the *Pastor* belongs the joys of muck-raking.  
 Gone is the clapping and the Amen chorus.  
 Gone is Girl Friday. . . . We're left with DeLouris.  
 A sad farewell to Women's Lib—  
 It's back to being Adam's rib!

Back to no-nonsense, straight-faced delivery,  
 The kind that makes even us "good guys" feel quivery.  
 Back to rapid-fire, predictable expounding;  
 Back to sermons that are regular sounding.

So say good-bye to sermon fun. . . .

Alas! It's back to Attila, the Hun.

Really, only a joke? What is this member saying to "traditional" preachers?

*WEEKLY RESPONSE TO EXPERIMENTAL SERMON*

St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
 Clearwater, Florida

Date of Sermon: \_\_\_\_\_

Your age: (please check) — 12-24. — 25-35. — 36-50. — over 50.

Please indicate your reaction to the sermon by circling the number that best expresses your response:

1—yes; 2—somewhat; 3—no

- 1 2 3—(1) The sermon held my interest.  
 1 2 3—(2) The sermon taught me something new.  
 1 2 3—(3) The sermon moved me to express my faith in daily living.  
 1 2 3—(4) The main points of the sermon were clear.  
 1 2 3—(5) The innovative aspect of the sermon helped me get the message.  
 1 2 3—(6) I heard God speaking as the Bible was proclaimed.  
 1 2 3—(7) The sermon was relevant to life today.  
 1 2 3—(8) The delivery of the sermon was satisfactory.  
 1 2 3—(9) I renewed my commitment to Jesus.  
 1 2 3—(10) I prefer this kind of sermon to the traditional type.

Suggestion for the preacher: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE FILL IN: HAND TO AN USHER, OR LEAVE IN PEW.

## FINAL RESPONSE TO EXPERIMENTAL SERMONS

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Clearwater, Florida

December 3, 1972

Your age: — 12-24, — 25-35, — 36-50, — over 50.

1. How many of the 9 sermons in the series did you hear? \_\_\_\_.
2. What was the over-all effect of the experimental sermons upon St. Paul's congregation: (underscore your answer)
  - (1) Beneficial      (2) Immaterial      (3) Negative
3. How frequently should innovative sermons be preached (underscore your answer):
  - (1) Every Sunday      (2) Occasionally      (3) Never
4. On the whole, the new forms of preaching: (underscore your answer)
  - (1) Helped me      (2) Interested me      (3) Turned me off
5. Which sermons proved most helpful? (Give 1st, 2nd, 3rd choices)
  - (1) "A Dinner of Bread Only"
  - (2) "Change of Life"
  - (3) "Worship: Agony or Ecstasy?"
  - (4) "Join the Jesus Party"
  - (5) "Conversation on Liberation"
  - (6) "Lift up Your Cup"
  - (7) "The Church's Dirty Five-Letter Word"
  - (8) "Be Merry, for Tomorrow we Live"
  - (9) "All You Wanted to Know about the Hereafter but Were Afraid..."
6. Which techniques were *least* effective? (Give 1st, 2nd, 3rd choices)
  - (1) The use of an object (bread, cup)
  - (2) Role playing (monologue by Jacob)
  - (3) Woman preacher
  - (4) Demonstrations (political parties)
  - (5) Dialogue between Ministers (women's liberation)
  - (6) Solo as a conclusion ("Fill my Cup, Lord")
  - (7) Interruption of the sermon by Reactors ("Money")
  - (8) Involvement by the congregation (Singing, clapping, dancing)
  - (9) Dialogue between preacher and congregation (End of the world)
7. What aspect of the innovative sermons did you find most objectionable?  
Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
8. What feature did you find most helpful?  
Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
9. These experimental sermons were superior to the traditional sermons because — (please check your answers)
  - (1) They were more interesting.
  - (2) Their new approach and method gave me a fresh insight into the Gospel.



- (3) They made me look forward to next Sunday's sermon.
  - (4) They released me from my "same-old-thing" rut of hearing a sermon.
  - (5) The new forms matched our changing world.
  - (6) They made the Gospel fresh, alive, and exciting for modern living.
10. Mark the following (T) True or (F) False:
- (1) The technique or method helped get the message across.
  - (2) The unfamiliar method detracted from the delivery of the sermon.
  - (3) The subject matter of the sermon influenced my acceptance of the method.
  - (4) The new forms are primarily for the younger generation.
  - (5) Both kinds of preaching should be offered: the innovative at one Service, and the traditional at the other Service.

MY OVER-ALL REACTION TO THIS PROJECT: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

# The Ministry as a Profession: An Empirical Assessment

by YOSHIO FUKUYAMA

After twelve years as Director of Research for the United Church of Christ, Yoshio Fukuyama became Professor and Graduate Officer in the Department of Religious Studies, Pennsylvania State University. A native of Los Angeles, Dr. Fukuyama is an alumnus of Doane College (A.B.) and the University of Chicago (B.D. and Ph.D.). From 1945 to 1948 he taught at the American School in Talas-Kayseri, Turkey, and is the author of several books, including *The Ministry in Transition* (Penna. State University Press, 1972) which is reviewed in this issue of *The Bulletin*. This paper was given originally during The International Congress of Learned Societies in the Field of Religion, Los Angeles, California, September 2, 1972.

A DISCUSSION about the ministry as a "profession" implies some uncertainty or ambiguity about the clergyman's professional status. The number of books and monographs appearing in recent years about the role of the minister in contemporary society clearly suggests that the professional status of the ministry is a problem; in fact, the professions as a whole have become problematical.

The social and technological changes of this century have not only changed the character of work but of the professions as well. The literature is replete with descriptions of "emerging" and "new" professions, of "semi-professions," and of the professionalization of non-professions and the non-professional character of traditional professions.<sup>1</sup>

The prevailing uncertainty about the minister's calling is suggested by the titles of recent publications. James E. Dittes' *Minister on the Spot* is characterized by his publisher as an "inquiry into the gut predicament of being a minister,"<sup>2</sup> while James D. Glasse's *Profession: Minister* is sub-titled "Confronting the Identity Crisis of the Parish Clergy."<sup>3</sup> Gerald J. Jud and his collaborators have written about *Ex-Pastors*, reporting on a survey of men who have left the parish ministry,<sup>4</sup> and Laile Bartlett has explored the same theme in her book about *The Vanishing Parson*.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wilbert E. Moore, *The Professions: Roles and Rules* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970). Moore devotes more than 50 pages to a "selected" bibliography on the professions. Some of the titles listed are indicative of the present ferment: "The Social Status of Teachers," "The Science Administrator: A New Profession," "The Emerging Profession of Business," and "The Unionization of Professional Engineers and Chemists." See also Amitai Etzioni, ed., *The Semi-Professions and Their Organization: Teachers, Nurses and Social Workers* (New York: Free Press, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> James E. Dittes, *Minister on the Spot* (Philadelphia and Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1970).

<sup>3</sup> James D. Glasse, *Profession: Minister* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968).

<sup>4</sup> Gerald J. Jud, Edgar W. Mills and Genevieve W. Burch, *Ex-Pastors: Why Men Leave the Parish Ministry* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> Laile Bartlett, *The Vanishing Parson* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

This concern about the minister's changing role and status is not new. Since 1956 a number of foundation-sponsored studies of the ministry and theological education have appeared, beginning with the Carnegie Corporation study of theological education directed by H. Richard Niebuhr.<sup>6</sup> This was soon followed by Samuel W. Blizzard's study of changing clergy roles for the Russell Sage Foundation,<sup>7</sup> the Lilly Endowment study of pre-theological education directed by Keith R. Bridston and Dwight W. Culver,<sup>8</sup> and most recently, Kenneth Underwood's study of the campus ministry sponsored by the Danforth Foundation.<sup>9</sup>

Paralleling these studies of the ministry and theological education have been numerous social studies and commentaries of religion in American society by Charles Y. Glock, Rodney Stark, Joseph H. Fichter, Will Herberg, Peter L. Berger, Harvey Cox and others suggesting that all is not well in the pews as well as the pulpit.<sup>10</sup> In short, the uncertainty of the minister's calling appears also to be the uncertainty of the Church in today's world.

This assessment of the ministry as a profession is based on the findings of a survey of theological education conducted in the United Church of Christ during the spring of 1967. Survey research methods were used to gather data from 1,191 ministers and 1,283 students enrolled in 13 theological seminaries affiliated with the denomination. The findings of this survey are shortly to be published in the volume *The Ministry in Transition: A Case Study of Theological Education*.<sup>11</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to describe the uncertainty of the ministry as a profession within the framework of a theory of the professions and to suggest some of the sources of this uncertainty as they have emerged from the research. We will begin with a brief description of the denomination in which the research was conducted before moving into the substantive aspects of the paper.

The United Church of Christ was formed in 1957 by a union of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church. This union brought together two major cultural and theological traditions in American

<sup>6</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956); H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams, eds., *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956); and H. Richard Niebuhr, Daniel D. Williams, and James M. Gustafson, *The Advancement of Theological Education* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1957).

<sup>7</sup> Samuel W. Blizzard, "The Minister's Dilemma," *The Christian Century*, Vol. 73, No. 17 (April 25, 1956), pp. 508-510.

<sup>8</sup> Keith R. Bridston and Dwight W. Culver, *Pre-Seminary Education* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965).

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Underwood, *The Church, The University, and Social Policy* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), 2 volumes.

<sup>10</sup> See for example, Charles Y. Glock et al., *To Comfort and to Challenge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Joseph H. Fichter, *Social Relations in the Urban Parish* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953); Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1955); Peter L. Berger, *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1961) and Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan, 1966).

<sup>11</sup> Yoshio Fukuyama, *The Ministry in Transition: A Case Study of Theological Education* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, in press).

Protestantism. Congregationalists trace their origins to England and the Calvinist theological tradition; the Evangelical and Reformed Church is rooted in the Pietistic movement of Germany and the Swiss reformation. In polity, the former was Congregational, the latter Presbyterian: numerically, the Congregationalists were identified since colonial times with New England while the Evangelical and Reformed churches were most numerous in Pennsylvania and Missouri.<sup>12</sup>

The United Church of Christ is uniquely ecumenical. Only 47 per cent of the laymen were reported in a recent national survey of the denomination to have been life-long members of either of the two denominations which formed the union.<sup>13</sup> In our present study, only 57 per cent of the ministers were originally Congregationalists or members of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. The rest, like the laymen they serve, were originally Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists and Presbyterians.

This ecumenical posture is also reflected in the manner in which ministers are recruited and trained. Of the 1,191 ministers, 52 per cent were trained in denominational seminaries, 23 per cent in interdenominational schools and 25 per cent in theological seminaries affiliated with other denominations. Of the 13 theological seminaries officially related to the denomination, seven are interdenominational. The remaining six are "denominational" schools which depend more directly than others on the denomination for student recruitment and financial support.

### *The Uncertain Calling*

According to our study of theological education in the United Church of Christ, ministers and students now enrolled in the seminaries affiliated with the denomination are uncertain about their calling. Thus uncertainty is seen first in terms of the predominant institutional context in which the minister pursues his profession and second in terms of the profession itself. The uncertainty of one's calling to be a minister is greater for the seminarian than it is for the minister. It is also greater for those who are trained in interdenominational seminaries than for those who attended denomination schools. This uncertainty is also reflected in a gap between the pulpit and the pew concerning the purpose of the church and its ministry.

In this as well as other Protestant denominations, the residentially based parish church is the primary institutional context in which the clergyman carries out his professional activities. Opportunities for alternative modes of ministry are limited to only a small proportion of the ordained clergy. It is therefore no surprise that much of the present anxiety about one's professional status should focus on the minister's relationship to the basic parochial form of ministry.

In Table 1 we report responses to the question, "What kind of work would you like to be doing five or ten years from now?" Fifty-seven per cent of the ministers and 37 per cent of the seminarians chose the parish ministry. For students, teach-

<sup>12</sup> Douglas Horton, *The United Church of Christ* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1962), chapter 3.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas C. Campbell and Yoshio Fukuyama, *The Fragmented Layman: An Empirical Study of Lay Attitudes* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970).



TABLE 1  
TYPE OF VOCATION ANTICIPATED BY MINISTERS AND  
SEMINARIANS AFTER FIVE OR TEN YEARS

<i>What kind of work would you like to be doing 5 or 10 years from now?</i>	<i>Per cent responding</i>	
	<i>Ministers</i>	<i>Seminarians</i>
Number responding	1,191	1,283
Parish ministry	57	37
College teaching	11	25
Ecumenical work	10	7
Campus ministry	6	11
Seminary teaching	6	11
Other professional work	6	7
Denominational work	5	3
Non-military chaplaincy	4	4
Military chaplaincy	2	2
Other	10	13

ing in college or seminary was a vocational option nearly as strong as the parish ministry.

When the choices reported in Table 1 are related to the type of seminary attended, commitment to the parish ministry is strongest for those who attended denominational seminaries and weakest for those who were trained in the interdenominational schools. For example, among seminarians now enrolled in the former Evangelical and Reformed schools, 57 per cent thought they would be in the parish ministry five or ten years later; among those responding from the interdenominational seminaries, only 30 per cent opted for the parish. In fact, 45 per cent of the respondents in the latter group chose college or seminary teaching.

If there is uncertainty about the residentially based parish church as the locus of one's ministry, there is even more uncertainty about remaining in the ministry itself. For only three respondents in ten—both ministers and students—"the idea of entering some vocation other than the ministry" was reported to have "little or no appeal." For 66 per cent of the ministers and 69 per cent of the seminarians, such a notion was "strong" or "sometimes" appealing, as Table 2 indicates (p. 102).

Again, disenchantment with the ministry itself was more salient for respondents educated in interdenominational seminaries than those who attended denominational schools. Seventy-three per cent of the pastors and 75 per cent of the students related to these ecumenical schools found the notion of entering some vocation other than the ministry to be strong or sometimes appealing.

Another indicator of the clergymen's vocational ambivalence is his critical attitude toward the "residential parish church." This particular form of ministry was selected because it is the modal institutional context for the profession. We

TABLE 2

ATTITUDES OF MINISTERS AND SEMINARIANS  
TOWARD LEAVING THE MINISTRY

<i>The idea of entering some vocation other than the ministry . . .</i>	<i>Per cent responding</i>	
	<i>Ministers</i>	<i>Seminarians</i>
Number responding	1,191	1,283
Still has a strong appeal to me	21	32
Sometimes appeals to me	45	37
Has little or no appeal to me	33	31

find in Table 3 that 38 per cent of the ministers are to some degree critical of the residential parish church while nearly half of the students express their reservations about it.

TABLE 3

ATTITUDES OF MINISTERS AND SEMINARIANS  
TOWARD THE LOCAL RESIDENTIAL PARISH CHURCH

<i>What is your general attitude and feeling toward the existing form of the local residential parish church?</i>	<i>Per cent responding</i>	
	<i>Ministers</i>	<i>Seminarians</i>
Number responding	1,191	1,283
Strongly supportive	25	15
Moderately or ambiguously supportive	32	29
Neutral	3	4
Moderately or ambiguously critical	25	31
Strongly critical	13	18
Other	3	3

Chi square = 50.1894; df = 5; p = less than .001

These findings lend support to Ardis Whitman's findings drawn from her national survey of 3,000 ministers which she reported in 1968:

Ministers in general seem to spend a lot of time thinking of leaving. More than two thirds of the total sample said they had thought of it . . . nearly half of all ministers in their twenties and thirties—and a not substantially smaller group in their forties—had thought *seriously* of leaving the ministry as against less than twenty-five per cent of the oldest group.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Ardis Whitman, "The View from the Pulpit." *McCall's* (February, 1968), p. 145.

According to Mrs. Whitman, the basic reason for thinking of leaving the ministry can be summed up in one word: *relevance*. "Relevance to what?" she continues, "To the world, to life, to 'where the action is,' to what it is they think a Christian should be doing."<sup>15</sup>

It is our general observation that the clergyman's feeling of the church's irrelevance is due in part to a basic conflict which exists between his conception of the church's purposes and those of his parishioners. Our study sums up the fundamental gap which exists between the pulpit and the pew in the following words:

... Ministers and seminary students are committed to a style of ministry which is clergy dominated and cognitively and action oriented. The laity, by contrast, are primarily interested in forms of church governance and leadership over which they exercise meaningful control and in affective ministries of the church which will serve their personal and family needs. All other issues which may divide the minister and his congregation are derived from this basic gap between pulpit and pew.<sup>16</sup>

These observations are supported by the findings reported in Table 4 in which pastors, students and laymen in the United Church of Christ were asked to evaluate the importance of ten typical programs most often found in parish churches. The data reported for the laymen are drawn from a survey conducted a year earlier and reported in a companion volume, *The Fragmented Layman: An Empirical Study of Lay Attitudes* published in 1970.<sup>17</sup>

TABLE 4  
IMPORTANCE OF TYPICAL CHURCH PROGRAMS  
RANKINGS ASSIGNED BY MINISTERS, SEMINARIANS AND LAYMEN

Rank	Ministers	Seminarians	Laymen
1	Study groups	Study groups	Church board
2	Social action group	Social action group	Church committees
3	Retreats	Adult Sunday School	Women's groups
8	Women's groups	Church committees	Social action groups
9	Prayer meetings	Men's groups	Prayer meetings
10	Men's groups	Women's groups	Retreats

Intermediate rankings have been excluded in Table 4 in order to highlight the dissonance between clergy and lay attitudes. It would appear that ministers and students are primarily oriented toward cognitive and action programs while the laity consider organizational activities to be most important. We might hypothesize that the present discontent with the existing form of the parish church could be reduced for the clergy if the laity would become more cognitively and

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Fukuyama, *op.cit.*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>17</sup> Campbell and Fukuyama, *op.cit.*

action oriented; or, the minister might make the accommodation and become more organizationally oriented.

This table also suggests a latent "clericalism" in the sense that both ministers and seminarians have ranked men and women's groups at the bottom of their lists. The programs most favored by the professionals are those in which the minister assumes primary leadership as the teacher and moral leader of the community. Laymen, by contrast, place their highest priorities where their leadership is primary: in the governance of the congregation and in the laymen's groups.

An important derivative of this fundamental gap between pulpit and pew is the dissonance between ministers and their parishioners over controversial social issues. In our study we learned that ministers and seminary students show a high degree of consensus, supporting the generally liberal position on such issues as civil rights; they also agree that the church should exercise active leadership in bringing about social reform.

Laymen, by contrast, show no such consensus. Their attitudes are fragmented, representing the entire spectrum from conservative to liberal on controversial social issues, with the church's role ranging from no direct action to active participation and leadership.

Finally, the following observation made in our study of theological education provides additional indicators of the sources of the minister's present vocational dilemma:

Here, then, is the real gap between pulpit and pew: ministers place their highest values on their roles as preacher and prophet; laymen esteem his priestly and pastoral roles above all others. . . . Laymen join churches primarily for deeply personal and family centered reasons. Ministers, by contrast, feel that the church ought to be more concerned with the public sector, with social ethics rather than with personal morality. The situation is exacerbated by the pattern of residential segregation which prevails in our society resulting in local churches which are too often organizations defined by racial, ethnic, or social class interests.

There is a certain ambivalence about the minister's calling. We found that he is well trained to engage in the style of ministry most desired by his parishioners (e.g., pastor and preacher), and when asked what further training he would like to have, he is most likely to select those fields which would further strengthen his role as pastor and preacher. While he expresses a need to be more active in working for social justice, he is least likely to want to pursue further study to become more professional in his prophetic role.<sup>18</sup>

These observations give support to Kenneth Underwood's study of the campus ministry when he noted "the bias of the minister toward being a man who works with *ideas* and *individuals* rather than with the responsible use of power in the structures of society." They also support Campbell and Pettigrew's general conclusion in their study of the moral dilemma of the Little Rock ministers during

<sup>18</sup> Fukuyama, *op.cit.*, p. 110.



the 1957 desegregation crisis in the sense that "the role of the minister as community reformer is not institutionalized . . . as are certain other roles associated with the ministry."<sup>19</sup>

To sum up, the uncertainty of the minister's calling today is seen in his disenchantment with the primary institutional context of his ministry—the residentially based parish church—and in his confusion about his role as a minister. He is well trained to fulfill his traditional roles as pastor, preacher and leader of worship; he places a high priority on his role as a social reformer but he is not specifically trained for it. His uncertainty about his work is exacerbated by conflicting role expectations between himself and his parishioners as well as by conflicting attitudes over controversial social issues and the proper role of the church in relation to these issues.

Having described the uncertainty of the ministry as a calling, we are now ready to consider the professional characteristics of the ministry from a theoretical perspective.

Our appraisal of the ministry as a profession is theoretically informed by Talcott Parsons' essay, "The Professions and Social Structure." Parsons' assertion that "many of the most important features of our society are to a considerable extent dependent on the smooth functioning of the professions" and that "our most important social functions are carried on in the institutional framework of the professions"<sup>20</sup> is a sociological way of saying what we have previously observed that the problem of the minister's vocation is nothing more than the problem of the Church in today's world.

### *The Service Function*

According to Parsons, the first characteristic of the professional man is the assumption that he is not "engaged in the pursuit of his personal profit, but in the performance of services to his patients or clients, or to impersonal values like the advancement of science."<sup>21</sup>

There can be little doubt that the ministry is a profession in the sense that the minister is primarily engaged "in the performance of services" rather than in the pursuit of personal profit. The minister's primary "clients" are his parishioners, particularly when one considers the clergyman's profession in an institutional framework. While he may see himself in more universalistic terms as "the servant of Christ" with the whole world as his parish, the overwhelming proportion of ministers have a very special, if not primary, responsibility to serve a specific social group which is his congregation.

This institutional setting in which the minister does his work is critical for his role definition. In the study of the ministers of Little Rock noted earlier, the re-

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Underwood, *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 431 and Ernest Q. Campbell and Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Racial and Moral Crisis: The Role of Little Rock Ministers," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 64, No. 5 (March, 1959), p. 515.

<sup>20</sup> Talcott Parsons, *Essays in Sociological Theory Pure and Applied* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1949), pp. 185-199.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

searchers identified three reference systems which contributed to their moral dilemma: the self, the profession, and the congregation. The ministers remained inactive during the racial crisis because the institutional structure, particularly their professional and parishioner reference systems, compelled them to maintain a peaceable atmosphere rather than to give leadership to social reform.<sup>22</sup>

In the conflict situation, the ministers of Little Rock placed their priority on their congregations, but the minister as a professional is also engaged in serving impersonal values such as justice, peace and public morality. His service to these values may be only indirectly related to his service to his parishioners; he may take to the streets to join a picket line, serve on the community's human relations commission, or sign a petition for peace. Or, he may attempt to engage his congregation directly in social action.

In this dual possibility for service we find one explanation for the gap between the pulpit and the pew which is an aspect of the minister's vocational crisis. We found in our research that men who were most firmly committed to serve as pastors of residentially based parish churches are least likely to entertain thoughts of leaving the ministry for some other vocation. On the other hand, those who expressed highest concern for serving impersonal values such as the churches' involvement in social issues are most likely to be thinking of leaving the ministry and least interested in serving as pastors of local churches.

The minister's primary client—the parishioner—defines the minister's role predominantly in the professional-client relationship rather than in the professional-impersonal value mode. The service he expects from his pastor is highly individualized in terms of his personal and familial needs. When evaluating the relative importance of church programs, pastors and seminarians place their highest priorities on the more cognitive and impersonal values such as study groups and social action; laymen, by contrast, place their priorities on their personal involvement in church activities such as church boards and committees and in laymen's groups where they exercise control.

In theory the church has accommodated itself to this conflict between service to persons and service to impersonal values by developing non-parochial or para-parochial forms of ministry. The more impersonal forms of ministry have, however, depended on the financial support of residentially based congregations. Thus the present crisis in the church and the uncertainty of the minister's calling is in part a function of its institutional structure. In its present institutionalized form, residentially based parish churches are most functional as instruments of comfort, serving the needs of individuals and families; non-parochial religious organizations, including denominational boards and agencies, are better equipped to serve the prophetic role, addressing themselves more directly to institutional needs and impersonal values.

Philip E. Hammond's study of campus ministers is an example of one way in which the church has tried to meet the minister's role conflict by providing an alternative institutional structure. Hammond observes that "the campus clergy

<sup>22</sup> Campbell and Pettigrew, *op.cit.*, pp. 509-516.

are systematically different from parish clergy" and the campus ministry is one way in which "mavericks" in the profession can remain in the Church while removing themselves from its primary institutional context.<sup>23</sup>

To be a professional, then, the minister needs to understand his dual responsibility. By serving exclusively the personal needs of his parishioners, he is often made to feel guilty and accused of being socially irrelevant or trivial in his ministry; by concentrating on his service to impersonal values, he is tempted to neglect the personal needs of his parishioners which may be very real and urgent. If he alienates them sufficiently he may lose the institutional support he needs to carry on his ministry.

### *The Basis of Authority*

The second important characteristic of the professional man is that he "exercises authority . . . based on superior technical competence."<sup>24</sup> Parsons is not referring here to certain kinds of authority, such as those based on church tradition or the authority of Scripture, which are important to clergymen. The authority of the professional from Parsons' sociological perspective is based on "technical" knowledge and is limited to this narrowly defined technical sphere. He refers to this type of authority as the "specificity of function."

In our research we found that the laymen are quite clear as to what is functionally specific about the ministry. When asked to describe the ways in which they think ministers spend their time, they mention most often leading worship, preaching, and pastoral care. These laymen also feel that ministers spend "too much time" in office administration, as social reformers and as fund raisers.

The laymen's responses identify the functions which are most specific to the minister, the traditional roles of priest, preacher, and pastor. The roles they criticize are those performed by others in society, for they can be done equally well by businessmen, union leaders or housewives.

If the laymen seem to be clear about what is functionally specific about the ministry, ministers and seminarians reflect some uncertainty and ambivalence. The problem centers primarily around the priority given to the role of "working for social justice" by the clergy and their student cohorts. The prophetic witness of Amos and Jeremiah provides an impressive biblical basis for the claim that social reform is among the central functions of the ministry, but in terms of his education or activities it is hardly "functionally specific" to the clergyman's profession. That social justice is a major, if not central concern of the church, is not the present issue. The issue is whether or not the minister's role as a professional practitioner is to be defined empirically in terms of the social reform function.

According to our research, the parishioner, the minister's primary client, does not include social reform as a major attribute of his minister's role. It is certainly not functionally specific or differentiating as far as the ministry as a profession is concerned. Social reformers can be recruited from all walks of life; they may be clergymen, but not necessarily so. What then is the content of the minister's tech-

<sup>23</sup> Philip E. Hammond, *The Campus Clergyman* (New York: Basic Books, 1966).

<sup>24</sup> Parsons, *op.cit.*, p. 189.

nical competence on which his authority is based? According to our data, it is his expert knowledge of the Bible and Theology.

Ministers claim to know more about the Bible and Theology than the laity; these are the areas of his superior "technical" competence and the basis of his professional authority.

Our research further shows that the majority of the ministers and seminary students majored in Bible or Theology in seminary, that courses in these fields were thought to have been the most helpful during their training, and that church programs such as study groups and preaching were given the highest priority.

Furthermore, the minister's pre-theological education and his desires for continuing education provide little support for his social reform impulses in any professional or technical sense. One might assume that a professional social reformer would include among his "superior technical competence" a degree of expertise in such fields as social organization, economics, political science, and other related areas. Less than one respondent in five selected the social sciences as an area for further study which might be helpful to his professional growth and competence. If they had an opportunity to return to their studies, most respondents wanted to pursue additional biblical and theological studies or psychology, a field most relevant to their pastoral counseling role.

There are many ministers who have developed a high degree of technical competence as a basis of their authority as social reformers but the majority seem to possess only a layman's knowledge of social organization and political processes needed for reform. Ministers are undoubtedly more "technically" trained as moralists to deal with problems of personal relationships than as social reformers to deal with the more impersonal problems of social and political change. The former is an area of functional specificity for ministers; the latter, while significant and functional, is not unique to the minister's profession.

### *Autonomy*

The third characteristic which distinguishes a profession is that status in a profession "is to a high degree independent of status in kinship groups, the neighborhood and the like, in short from what are sometimes called primary group relationships."<sup>25</sup> The status of the professional man is judged on the basis of universalistic criteria determined by one's professional peers and is not subject to the particularism of local groups.

A minister may thus be adjudged "incompetent" and thrown out of his pulpit by a local congregation because he was at odds with the power elite in the congregation or violated the mores of the community. His professional status would not be compromised under such conditions if, in the judgment of his professional peers, he had remained faithful to the established canons of his profession.

Professionals are usually organized into societies which function to regularize professional status and to oversee the ethical behavior of their members. One of the

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.



problems for the ministry as a profession is that the minister is not a member of a professional society in the usual sense of the term. Unlike physicians or lawyers or sociologists who belong to national professional societies, clergymen are more likely to belong to local judicatory groups which are denominationally fragmented and whose memberships change as ministers move from one locality to another.

Ecumenical ministerial groups are often nothing more than "antipoaching" societies. This term was used by Vidich and Bensman to characterize the ministers' groups of Springdale, a small town in upstate New York which they studied. As "professionals" sharing a common calling, they met regularly to plan community-wide religious observances, made arrangements to look after one another's parishioners during their summer vacations, but most importantly made sure that denominational prerogatives were observed when new families moved into town.<sup>26</sup>

If there is a major weakness in the professional character of the ministry, it is perhaps at this point, for too often the minister's achievement and competence is judged by particularistic rather than by universalistic criteria, by local boards and congregations rather than by the profession at large. The experience of the Little Rock ministers cited earlier is a case in point. The criteria used by the professional reference group—the local ministerium—to judge the behavior of the city's ministers were particularistic rather than universal, local rather than national. In fact, many ministers acknowledge that their attitudes and behavior were inconsistent with positions taken by their denominational bodies on the desegregation issue.<sup>27</sup>

The organization of The Academy of Parish Clergy a few years ago provides some promise for an authentic professional society for clergymen. If the Academy gets preoccupied solely with raising ministers' salaries and upgrading educational requirements, however, it will become a trade union rather than a professional society. Such concerns are not alien to the interests of professional societies, for they serve functional needs of the profession; but professional societies have other concerns.

Functional equivalents for the ministry do exist. They are largely groups of specialized professionals in such areas as religious education, pastoral counseling, religious research and the various academic fields among theological educators. As other professional societies, these groups are organized nationally, publish journals, hold conventions, read papers for critical peer evaluation and otherwise maintain their professional identity. The Academy of Parish Clergy may in time do for the parish pastor what the American Medical Association does for the practicing physician.

### *Goals and Achievement*

The fourth characteristic of professionalism suggested by Parsons has to do with the problem of self interest and its correlate the goal of the professional. Put in another way, what is it that the professional is trying to achieve and how is his achievement recognized?

<sup>26</sup> Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, *Small Town in Mass Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), chapter 9.

<sup>27</sup> Campbell and Pettigrew, *op.cit.*



The professional practitioner presumably seeks "success." But success is meaningless without recognition. The medical doctor's success may be objectively measured by the number of people he cures or the number of babies he brings into the world. The "symbols of recognition" may be community respect, the esteem of his professional peers, the growth of his practice and wealth.

Ministers, too, seek success as professional practitioners. There are those who keep careful records of the number of baptisms, weddings and funerals conducted, the number of pastoral calls made or sermons preached. For others, the visible "symbols of recognition" are to be found in the growing statistics of church membership, attendance and giving which are reported each year to denominational headquarters. Success is also objectified by promotions up the hierarchical ladder, by moving from smaller to larger churches, from lesser to greater responsibilities.

But these indicators of success and achievement are culturally determined and for many irrelevant to the minister's professional goals. Much of what the minister does cannot be defined in terms of objective achievement or be made subject to recognition by one's peers. Often what is most objectively discernible, such as the increase in institutional strength, may not be esteemed by one's peers. At other times, the minister's "success" in leading an unpopular cause may be subject to criticism rather than praise. The conflict between ministries of comfort and ministries of challenge, between ministries to individuals and families and ministries to impersonal social values, between the need for institutional survival and the call to lose one's life in order to find it, all point to tensions which prevail in church and ministry. Such tensions are functional for the profession so long as they provide the context for self-criticism and motivation to explore new ideas and techniques for the achievement of the more fundamental purposes of the church and its ministry.

Clergymen have an understandable reluctance to speak of their profession in terms of "success" and "achievement" for the minister's calling transcends the content generally given to these terms. What he does want are "support systems" which are adequate to help him cope with the changing needs of his profession.

### *The Professions and the University*

There is one further dimension of professionalism which needs to be mentioned before concluding our analysis. It is the role of the university in the training of the professional. Bernard Barber has argued that the more professional a profession is, the more likely it is to train its recruits in university-related schools. A characteristic of "emerging or marginal professions" is its desire to "locate themselves in universities" as they try to "raise standards for themselves."<sup>28</sup>

Barber lists a number of advantages provided by a university-based professional school. One of its basic functions is "the transmission to its students of the generalized and systematic knowledge that is the basis of professional performance." The professional school can borrow "resources of knowledge" from other depart-

<sup>28</sup> Bernard Barber, "Some Problems in the Sociology of Professions," *Daedalus*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (Fall, 1963), p. 674.

ments, co-op teaching and research resources and in other ways get the cooperation of the university community.<sup>29</sup>

He sees the university professional schools as "the leading, though not the sole, innovators and systematizers of ideas for their professions" and the professional school faculty as "ethical role models" for their students. Perhaps most important for Barber is the detachment of the university professional school from the profession:

For both its knowledge and its ethical functions, the relative insulation of the university professional school has certain advantages. It is relatively freer of those commitments to other organizations and other interests that practicing professionals have, and therefore it is more nearly able to maintain the highest intellectual and moral standards. Also, it can use the general insulation of the university from certain pressures to fortify itself in the performance of its functions, sometimes even in the face of resistance or opposition from the practicing professionals themselves.<sup>30</sup>

Of the thirteen seminaries related to the United Church of Christ, four of the interdenominational schools are located in major universities and two of the three remaining interdenominational schools and one denominational seminary are located adjacent to universities so that the functions mentioned by Barber can be served in the training of ministers.

Our survey has shown that respondents attending university-related schools are indeed freer of institutional commitments, tend to be more critical of the profession as its institutional framework, and are more open to alternative styles of work and education. University-based professional education is dysfunctional for the denomination in the sense that the church exercises little or no control over the students' technical training and has little opportunity to elicit the students' loyalty or commitment to the organization.

Most ministers and theological students of this denomination place a relatively low priority on theological education in a university context. This may be due in part to the present crisis in the university itself: ministers and seminarians may be as uncertain about the purposes and functions of the university as they are about the Church today.

### *The Profession in Retrospect*

In the light of all this, the professional status of the ministry is clearly a problem. The minister is a professional man in the sense that he is engaged in service to his parishioners and to the community at large. His professional authority is unquestionably based on his superior technical competence—principally his expert knowledge of Bible and Theology—and he applies this knowledge in the performance of functionally specific roles as preacher, priest, and pastor.

The ministry is less than professional in the sense that clergymen are not organized into professional societies which function to guard the esoteric knowl-

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 674-675.

edge and skills of the profession, set up standards of recruitment and performance, pursue new knowledge, meet regularly and publish journals. Organizations of ministers are fragmented by denominationalism, are usually local in scope, and their memberships are transitory because of the minister's geographic mobility.

One of the major sources of the contemporary minister's uncertainty about his calling is that his role as a leader of social reform is not functionally specific to his profession. While he may speak with authority about the normative aspects of social problems to the extent that his authority is derived from his superior technical knowledge of Bible and Theology, he lacks the superior technical competence in areas which are critical to the solution of complex social and economic problems of modern society. Thus, when he speaks out on these issues, he does so more as a well-informed layman than as a technical expert, as a civic-minded citizen rather than as a professional practitioner.

It is therefore no accident that some clergymen leave parochial ministries when they have developed technical competence as social reformers, for the modal form of the parish church is often dysfunctional for their professional goals. Some of these men find positions within the church in non-parochial ministries such as in specialized work in disadvantaged communities or as leaders of social action groups. The study of "ex-pastors" by Jud and his colleagues reported that "social service or social change" was mentioned by nearly one-third of their respondents as the area of current employment. One ex-pastor in five found himself in secular education and nearly the same proportion in other professions.<sup>31</sup>

It is likely that the present uncertainty of the ministry as a profession will continue in the years ahead, for the basic tension between the professional's service to personal values and service to impersonal values, between the minister's priestly-pastoral role and his prophetic role are necessary dimensions of what it means to be a professional and to be a minister.

<sup>31</sup> Jud et al., *op.cit.*, p. 49.

# Nathaniel W. Taylor (1786-1858): On Speaking of the Trinity

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THE theological countryside of eighteenth and early nineteenth century New England was by no means a pastoral symphony, but a rocky and pock-marked terrain in which the mountains of doctrinal controversy and the valleys of dogmatic differences had not been made plain. Nowhere is this more evident than in the controversy that broke out over the doctrine of the trinity, the great bulk of which has issued forth less as a great contribution to the history of doctrine and more as a headache to library catalogers. This negative judgment does not, however, disallow a rather finely spun thread of argumentation on the trinity that may be traced from Jonathan Edwards to Horace Bushnell. Much vitality is in evidence in this lineage as the trinity passed through such creative minds as Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), Nathaniel Emmons (1745-1840), William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), Moses Stuart (1780-1852), Samuel Miller (1769-1850), Andrews Norton (1786-1853). Finally to this list of notables must be added the New Haven theology and the name of Nathaniel W. Taylor (1786-1858), whose views on the trinity bring to culmination a long doctrinal development that preceded him and opened the way for emerging theological forces that were to follow him.

The movement of theological education from parsonages to theological seminaries followed space after the founding of Andover in 1808. The Yale Divinity School was founded in 1822, as a part of this movement, to sponsor the theology of three men: Chauncey A. Goodrich, Eleazer T. Fitch, and Nathaniel W. Taylor. Of this New Haven triumvirate, Nathaniel William Taylor was certainly the most powerful mind and left the most enduring theological legacy. The theology which emerged under his leadership at Yale is described by the school's biographer as "more a temper than a creed, a temper of critical conformity and filial dissent."<sup>1</sup>

Taylor was graduated from Yale in 1807, and tutored briefly for the Van Rensselaer family in Albany before returning to New Haven to study theology in the home of Timothy Dwight. Following this course of study, he was installed as pastor of the First Congregational Church of New Haven, where over a period of ten years he distinguished himself as a very powerful preacher. In 1822 he was appointed to the Dwight Professorship of Didactic

<sup>1</sup> Roland Bainton, *Yale and the Ministry* (New York, 1958), p. 96. See also E. A. Pope, "The Rise of the New Haven Theology," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 44 (March, 1966), 22-44 (June, 1966), 106-121.



Theology in the Yale Divinity School, a position which he held until declining health forced him to retire in 1857. He is best known for his contributions to the discussions centering on the nature of the will and of original sin. Interest here, however, will focus on his important and often overlooked essay on the trinity published in the volume *Essays, Lectures, Etc., in Revealed Theology*.

The theological affairs of New Haven were always under suspicion by the orthodox, and this is no less true of the doctrine of the trinity than it is of the doctrine of original sin. In the hands of as creative a thinker as Taylor, all doctrines were bound to undergo careful scrutiny and certain modifications. For example, Taylor did not think it amiss to inform his students that "the proposition that there are three persons in one God, in the ordinary signification of the terms, is absurd."<sup>2</sup> This introductory statement sets the tone and establishes the direction of Taylor's inquiry: the trinity is primarily a problem of language and can be understood if properly expressed. In fact, Taylor is not about to concede that the powers of logic cannot render a clear definition of the trinity. "I must be permitted to profess to understand what I believe."<sup>3</sup> There is no recourse to, or safety in mystery; if the trinity is in fact a revealed doctrine it can be taught and understood, otherwise it should be discarded. Facts are not mysterious, and the trinity is a fact of revelation, a truth of the gospel on which men of

common sense may arrive at a "settled opinion." The point now is to give expression to this fact without being charged with absurdity. Men's logical and linguistic faculties have not been given for nothing, but to frame a peculiar and authorized use of language in discussing such matters as the trinity. The task is to define the laws of this usage and to apply them consistently to such terms as "being" and "person" as used in theological discourse. That Trinitarians have not done this is the source of their grief and confusion.

Taylor's recital of the course of Trinitarian thought from Nathanael Emmons (1745-1840) to Moses Stuart (1780-1852) ends in total dissatisfaction. Of Emmons "it is difficult to say anything positively," and of Stuart little more can be added. The whole problem is an unauthorized use of language, which renders fear of both tritheism and Unitarianism quite spurious—the real issue is absurdity. However, properly qualified and authorized language can overcome the difficulties of defining the trinity, and Taylor is prepared to demonstrate what he means:

God is one being, in such a modified sense of the terms as to include three persons in such a modified sense of the terms, that, by his tri-personality, or by the three persons of his Godhead he is qualified, in a corresponding modified sense, for three distinct, personal, divine forms of phenomenal action; or thus, God, in a modified use of the language, is one being in three persons, qualified by the three persons of the Godhead for three distinct, divine, personal forms of phenomenal action.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Nathaniel W. Taylor, *Essays, Lectures, Etc. upon Select Topics in Revealed Theology* (New York, 1859), p. 1. See also, Sidney E. Mead, *Nathaniel W. Taylor: A Connecticut Liberal* (Chicago, 1942), Chap. X.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

If this didn't exactly warm the hearts of the orthodox and change the minds of the Unitarians, then so be it; let them both remain enshrouded in their absurdities. As for New Haven, an enlightened hermeneutics would be erected by which the language of the sacred writers might properly be interpreted. So long though as interpreters of the Scriptures, both Trinitarians and Unitarians, confuse the ordinary with the peculiar use of language, so long will they continue in absurdities and contradictions against which they are defenseless in the face of Infidelity.

With the armor of Scottish common sense, Taylor approaches the terms "being" and "person" and finds that both must be turned from their ordinary usage to a peculiar and authorized usage. The problem of the one God subsisting in three persons is primarily a language problem, and the nature of the issue at hand permits us to use the terms "being" and "person" in a peculiar sense: "the exigency of the case permits this, and it is really not uncommon."<sup>5</sup> He incidentally notes that "the Unitarians should hail this principle as a full concession."<sup>6</sup>

With this now understood, Taylor is ready to hazard a definition of the trinity:

That God is one being in such an extended sense of the terms, as to involve three persons in such a restricted sense of the terms, that by his tri-personality, or by the three persons of the Godhead, he is qualified in a corresponding restricted sense, for three distinct, personal, divine forms of phenomenal action.<sup>7</sup>

The doctrine of the trinity clearly has reached an impasse; it has come to its most logical conclusion in New England theology.

Arguing *via negativa*, Taylor questions the possibility of the Unitarian claim to a *a priori* knowledge that God does not exist as three in one. To employ language in its ordinary usage to describe God's subsistence, of course, issues in absurdity; but language employed in an authorized and peculiar usage not only avoids absurdity and contradiction, but renders the trinity understandable and, therefore, believable. If the Unitarian still objects that he cannot understand how God can exist as three in one, the question simply "is the measure of his conception the measure of all possibilities in the nature of things?"<sup>8</sup> Failing to understand how three persons can exist as one being is not the same as saying that it cannot be done. The charge of absurdity brought against the trinity aggravates Taylor deeply, and he brings the full force of his keen metaphysical mind to demonstrate that those who make this charge pretend to know too much; the Unitarian charge of contradiction cannot be known, because who is to say God *cannot* exist as three in one. One soon learns to respect the force of logic as the way to truth in Taylor's theology, and his independence of thought had a profound influence on his students at Yale, not the least of whom was Horace Bushnell.

Having demonstrated to the satisfaction of reasonable men that it cannot be known absolutely that three persons existing as one being is a contradiction, Taylor proceeds to build upon this as a

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

presumption for the truth of the trinity. Here the problem of language becomes central, because he demonstrates that the extension of language to a peculiar usage beyond the ordinary usage permits us to speak intelligibly of three persons in one being. Neither reason nor revelation presents evidence against this extension of language to a further meaning. Thus, the very nature of revelation itself demands the extension of language to bring it to expression. Language must grow with "God's progressive revelation," and to miss this is to subject the Christian faith to a miserable assortment of absurdities and contradictions. For example, when the time came to unfold the great work of redemption, further knowledge of God was given, and with it an extension of the term "being." This fluidity of language is not arbitrary, because in "peculiar" no less than in "ordinary" usage certain laws apply, hermeneutical principles which must be observed strictly.

The argument then turns to the manner in which language is used in the Scripture respecting the mode of the divine subsistence and the person of Christ. Taylor asserts that the language of Scripture "is not characterized by the authorized obscurity of enigma, of allegory, or prophetic annunciation, or of typical or symbolic representation. . . . It bears none of the peculiar marks of figurative or metaphorical language."<sup>9</sup> It was to this aspect of Taylor's understanding of language that his pupil, Horace Bushnell, reacted so strongly. However, the over-all influence of Taylor's theory of language on Bushnell is considerable and too often underestimated. In turn, there is evi-

dence that Bushnell's theory of language led to certain modifications in Taylor's thought, particularly at this point of the figurative or metaphorical nature of language. There are indications that this present essay on the trinity is unfinished, which may account in part for the apparent ambiguity in Taylor's thought on the relation of the literal and metaphorical usage of language. Elsewhere, for example, he says that words are "signe of our conceptions of things."<sup>10</sup> The point is simply that Taylor's essay on the trinity makes obvious the need of a new theory of language and in turn a new doctrine of revelation. As a transition figure from the inherited orthodoxy of the eighteenth century to the liberal theology of the nineteenth century, Taylor is as much a part of the problem as he is of the solution.

However, it is finally the Scottish realism of the New Haven theology that comes to the foreground; the Scriptures are written by plain men to be understood by plain men. A common sense inquiry into the use of language in Scripture will soon reveal that neither Trinitarians nor Unitarians of the present day properly have established their principles of interpretation, with the result that the Infidel has a strong case in declaring a plague on both houses. The root of the problem is the appeal of both Trinitarians and Unitarians to inspiration as the foundation of Scriptural use of language. Such an appeal settles nothing. Language is just as meaningless if improperly employed by an inspired, as by an uninspired writer. The prior question

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

of the manner in which language is used must be settled first:

You do not ask first whether the writers are inspired but how they *use* language. If the language is meaningless on the supposition that they are not inspired, it is equally so on the supposition that they are.<sup>11</sup>

The appeal to inspiration is insufficient grounds to counter the charge of absurdity; simply appealing to the inspiration of the Scriptures to establish or to deny the doctrine of the trinity or the divinity of Christ is insufficient.

Noting the relative success of the Trinitarian argument from exegetical grounds, Taylor expresses his intention of pushing for a new hermeneutics:

The history of the progress of Unitarianism in this country, as well as some recent limited tendencies toward it, clearly indicate the necessity, not only of explaining the doctrine of the trinity, of insisting on the possibility of its truth, and of removing all presumptions against its truth, but of showing how the peculiar language of the Scripture is fully accounted for and authorized in view of the nature of the subject and the circumstances of the case; on what principles such peculiar language ought to be interpreted, and what, when interpreted on these principles, is its actual meaning.<sup>12</sup>

The task then is to demonstrate that the language under consideration is characterized by some peculiar usage. The literal meaning cannot be adopted as

the proper meaning of language in Scripture. To charge the Scripture writers, men of "good sense," with employing language in its literal sense is an unauthorized assumption:

That such men as the writers of the Scripture should ignorantly or inadvertently fall into such palpable self-contradictions as are charged upon them is incredible. . . .<sup>13</sup>

The question of meaning is central, and the Trinitarians have failed to explain what they mean by the peculiar use of certain terms and on what principles they have arrived at that peculiar use, ending in an arbitrary usage that is hopelessly confusing.

What advocate of the trinity has ever attempted to show what the changes are, and on what principles of usage they are authorized, and having done this, to fix the precise import of the language in its changed and yet authorized use?<sup>14</sup>

Taylor's answer to this inquiry is simple and direct: "No trinitarian has ever tried this. . . ." As a defense against the charge of absurdity, Taylor's essay is a masterful presentation; as an explication of the trinity as a necessary concomitant of the Christian understanding of revelation, it is rather lacking.

Taylor's survey of three prevailing forms of presenting the doctrine of the trinity in New England theology ends in a rejection of all three. The first of these three forms is the argument from the eternal generation of the Son, which according to Taylor violates every prop-

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96. Such allegations about the nature of inspiration naturally were bound to place Taylor under suspicion by the orthodox.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.



er law of usage of language. He rejects this form of presenting the trinity on the ground that the second person is thereby made to have a derived and dependent existence, neither of which properly applies to the Godhead. Taylor is essentially borrowing Moses Stuart's argument against eternal generation, with the added conviction that the use of the term "God" in this form of presenting the trinity "is one of the most unobvious, palpably indefinite, and self-contradictory, conceivable."<sup>15</sup>

Taylor's unsympathetic attitude toward the doctrine of eternal generation is discerned in student notes of his "Lectures on Revealed Theology" between 1838-1840, where he observes

it is claimed that there must be generation in order to render the use of the term "Son" proper. The principle text adduced is Psalm 2:7, "This day have I begotten thee." But what does the word "begotten" mean here? The text proves anything rather than eternal generation.<sup>16</sup>

He then proceeds to detail his own understanding of the Sonship of Christ, which

expresses to us Christ in his divine nature as well as human, sustaining the office of Messiah. To most of those to whom Christ spoke, the phrase had not that meaning, for they knew nothing of the trinity. I regard it as a formal designation of the second person of the Godhead to the office of Messiah. There was no doubt

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>16</sup> Nathaniel W. Taylor, "Notes on Revealed Theology," recorded by R. C. Learned, MS in the Library of Yale Divinity School, p. 27. (Italics original.)

an eternal distinction in the Godhead, a fitness in the first person to be Governor, in the second to be Mediator, the authority and endearment of which relations are appropriately designated by the terms Father and Son.<sup>17</sup>

On his understanding of eternal Sonship then, Taylor follows in the lineage of the later Edwardeans and not the heritage of strict orthodoxy.

A second form of presenting the trinity in New England theology, stemming from Nathanael Emmons, is that which asserts that the three persons of the Godhead are three distinct minds or agents, each being a complete subsistence. This form of presenting the trinity Taylor rejects out of hand as employing the term "God" in "a wholly new sense, and as denying the existence of one God."<sup>18</sup> It is a virtual tri-theism.

A third form of presenting the doctrine of the trinity is that devised by Moses Stuart, which asserts a threefold distinction in the Godhead denoted by the personal pronouns, without, however, describing affirmatively what this threefold distinction or tri-personality is. Despite profound points of obvious influence of Stuart on Taylor's formulation of the trinity and the eternal Sonship of Christ, the New Haven theologian is abusively critical of the Andover exegete's use of language:

The error in respect to this language is not that its use is characterized by an unauthorized and improper peculiarity, but that it is characterized by no peculiarity at all.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> Taylor, *Essays, Lectures, Etc.*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

Such an arbitrary use of language has of necessity subjected the doctrine of the trinity to charges of absurdity and contradiction, and while he does not impugn Stuart's exegesis, Taylor is far from satisfied with his theory of language.

Before bringing his treatise to a rather abrupt and indefinite ending, Taylor asserts once more the capacity of language to be used in a definite meaning, and the necessity properly to employ it to give the meaning intended. After all, the Scripture writers have employed language in a peculiar and authorized way; who are later day theologians to do any less? The alternative is recourse to a use of language "that comports rather with idiocy" than with the revelation of God. But since the trinity is a revealed doctrine (but not a doctrine of revelation), we may assume that it is reasonable, statable, and believable. Common sense cautions us against speculation on the being of God, while at the same time urging upon us a peculiar and authorized use of language that saves us from absurdity and contradiction when we do speak of the nature of God. In other words, only a new theory

of language and a new doctrine of revelation can rescue the doctrine of the trinity. Neither of these is forthcoming in Taylor, although he contributes to an atmosphere in which a more progressive orthodoxy is possible.

Taylor's liberal theological leanings by no means induced him to abandon the doctrine of the trinity in favor of Unitarianism. The trinity is an essential item of Christian belief and practice, and the theological enterprise needs the insights provided by this doctrine. However, when a doctrine becomes opaque rather than transparent, when it becomes a source of obscurity rather than clarity, then it must be subjected to radical criticism and restatement. Certainly radical criticism of the doctrine of the trinity was forthcoming in the theology of Nathaniel Taylor, but its restatement awaited the work of Horace Bushnell. Taylor's contributions though are considerable, not only in terms of his personal influence on numerous students, the power of logic in his thought, the scope of his vision, but above all in his spirit of critical reflection.

# Authenticating Christian Experience: A Research Request

by JAMES E. LODER  
and MARK LAASER

## I

IN the 1960's we saw the rapid rise and subsequent legal limitation of drug-induced religious experience. Timothy Leary gave it all an unfortunate turn, but others set about seriously trying to make synthetic mystical experiences available to persons who were in therapeutic need of them. Such persons were usually chronically depressed or terminally ill. The drug-induced mystical experience provides the best, most extreme example of a humanitarian effort to synthesize the encounter with God. There are many other devices, not the least of which may be conventionalized Christianity. It may well be that ritualized relations with "God" have had a more powerful manipulative effect than, say, psilocybin. In any case, drug-induced mysticism forces the issue of the authentic versus the synthetic encounter with God.

One person who was interested in manufacturing synthetic mystical experiences for therapeutic purposes was the late Dr. Walter Pahnke. On Good Friday, 1962, prior to his research on drug therapy for dying persons, he performed an often cited experiment in Marsh Chapel of Boston University. After culling through the classical mystical literature, he developed the fol-

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lowing categories to describe the mystical consciousness. In this a person had: 1) an experience of undifferentiated unity; 2) insightful, authoritative knowledge; 3) transcendence of space and time; 4) sense of sacredness; 5) deeply-felt positive mood; 6) an a-logical paradoxicality in self-perception; 7) an alleged sense of ineffability; 8) a sense of transiency of the mystical moment; 9) positive changes in attitude and/or behavior. It was clearly evident from this experiment that drugs can enhance conventional mystical experiences in most all categories except "sense of sacredness." The significance of responses in this category was unclear.<sup>1</sup>

This exception focuses the issue of authenticity which should gain our special attention in the 1970's. We are currently in an era marked by an increase in the popularity of religious experience. Such experience extends from the most esoteric practices of Eastern religious exercises to the serious, pervasive and still expanding charismatic movement. These experiences raise in a way that the more conventional religious experiences never did—but should have

<sup>1</sup> Walter N. Pahnke, *Drugs and Mysticism: An Analysis of the Relationship Between Psychedelic Drugs and the Mystical Consciousness*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1963.

—the issue of authenticity. Can authenticity in mystical experiences rest to any degree upon something fundamentally behavioral such that these experiences can be engendered by subduing normal ego-functioning and heightening (whether by bio-chemical or social technique) certain organic processes? Or does authenticity depend irreducibly upon a person-to-person encounter with the holy God whose presence is at least as objective as our own?

## II

For the sake of semantic clarity in this brief discussion, we will refer to the objectivity of God as his "otherness" and to the objectivity of the scientific method and of self-understanding as two aspects of "human objectivity." Obviously the distinction between these last two notions of objectivity could bear a good deal more discussion, but the distinction between "otherness" and "human objectivity" is the main one with which we are concerned.

Given this main distinction, we could on theological grounds quickly assert that authenticity depends irreducibly upon the person-to-person encounter. However, the "otherness" of God is difficult to ascertain and impossible to operationalize. Ultimately an experimenter must rely upon self-report just as Pahnke did in his study. That this method does not automatically reduce "otherness" to some form of "human objectivity" is evidenced by the ambiguous results Pahnke received on the question of sacredness in which the sense of the presence of God as "holy" and "other" is the decisive matter. Self-report does not automatically dissolve into self-delusion and reductionism.

In fact one might go so far as to

assert on the basis of Pahnke's study that Divine otherness is not necessarily related to the manifest sensations of an ecstatic, transcending and personality-changing experience in a religious setting on a holy day. To put it more positively, the reality of Divine otherness is definitive enough so that even under optimal conditions for producing a psychological projection of "otherness," it does not appear. Yet it is consistently included with clarity and centrality in the writings and meditations of the great mystics. In other words, in authentic religious experience, whether one views it theologically or experimentally, Divine otherness is a real, decisive factor that cannot be synthesized.

## III

In authenticating Christian experience there is both a critical distinction and a positive relation between Divine otherness and human objectivity. Both are of crucial importance in the authentication of Christian experience. It is the distinction which must be made—regardless of how "fantastic" the unity, transcendence, and general excitement of the synthetic religious experience may seem—if one is to separate those experiences which are creative of a person in his relation to God from those which are simply expansions of psychic potential and which, as is well known, can often turn into a "bad trip." It is in fact the integrity of the otherness of God that allows him to enter the "bad trip" where feeling states defy the reality of Divine otherness, where the synthetic god of fantastic feeling states could never be and there to do what God has always done to bring order out of chaos.



If, on the other hand, we now stress the positive relationship between "otherness" and human objectivity, then we suggest that there is a unique relationship between what is felt or sensed and what is declared when one encounters the otherness of God. This relationship which rests on the side of human objectivity is not bound to particular feeling states or self-perceptions, but is instead a pattern of interaction between what is felt and what is declared, between subject and object, between self and world.<sup>2</sup> This relational pattern is an essential conformity with the major aspects of the creative process, and it is a pattern which distinguishes creativity from neurosis.<sup>3</sup>

The pattern has five steps or moves which are made in the realm of the psychic correlation between subject and object but in response to the "otherness" of God. These will simply be stated and illustrated because the point of these few paragraphs lies beyond this particular discussion. The *first* move is a consciousness of conflict which one engages in a baffling or seemingly futile struggle. The *second* move is an interlude in which one crosses the line of repression and submits the struggle to off-conscious resources and the free action of God. The interlude may be as subtle as a shift of attention or as pro-

longed as several years of forgetfulness. The *third* move is an insight that comes spontaneously and unexpectedly independent of situational conditions and with the force of an intuition of truth. The *fourth* move is a release of the tension bound up with the struggle. The *fifth* move is an interpretation of the insight in objective terms. The terms may be the language of sign, symbol or action, or all three, but the intention of interpretation in this pattern is to construct for public view, i.e., in some objective form, the continuity between the insight and the initial conflict. If such an interpretative continuity be lacking, the solution may have an escapist or neurotic character, and any resultant solution would be only apparent.

Following is an example of a case in which an individual went through this process in a relatively short period of time. Although in this case the individual apparently went through the sequence in the order of moves described above, the order itself is not significant. What is significant is that all positions be covered with the resolution's being decisive enough to leave the initial conflict in the past. Put positively, the resolution should open the future.

This case was given in response to a questionnaire:

When I read your description I thought immediately of my father. When I was about two years old, my father was stationed on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific. It was during WWII and the experience occurred on the eve of one of the major battles. My father said that a lot of the men were upset and some were openly crying because of the tension and the waiting. He said he felt all torn up

<sup>2</sup> One may even be able to add "between the right and left hemispheres of the brain" if neurology continues to support the research of the "brain changers" as described by Maya Pines in *The New York Times Magazine*, September 9, 1973, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> For an elaboration of this process, see Harold Rugg, *Imagination* (New York: Harpers, 1963), especially Ch. 15. For an elaboration of the distinction between neurosis and creativity, see James E. Loder, *Religious Pathology and Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966).

inside, not knowing what was going to happen the next day and not knowing what would happen to his wife and child if he didn't come through the battle alive. He was standing watch on the bridge around sunset when he had what he describes as a tremendously powerful experience. It was a feeling of calm, as if someone were saying to him, "It's all right." He said it was a strange feeling because he didn't think it meant that he would come through the battle alive, but rather that no matter what happened it would be all right for him, my mother and me. He said he felt a tremendous peace sweep over him and his immediate thought was, "So this is what Jesus or the Holy Spirit is like." He said the experience not only carried him through the night and the battle the next day, it is something he has never forgotten.

One of the things that makes me take my father's experience very seriously is that it resulted in personality change. He said that before that time he had not been very interested in religion and in church. He said he felt a change to a new kind of appreciation of the Christian faith and a new kind of openness to God. Looking at his life, I can affirm this as a reality even today, while from his account of his life I can see that this was not always so.

The individual here faces a conscious conflict and the struggle has a mounting intensity. He is torn up in the face of death and thoughts of avoiding or resolving the conflict seem futile. The interlude appears as he looks into the sunset, keeping watch. In an off-conscious state, "as if" someone were there

speaking to him, there appears spontaneously and unexpectedly a profound insight that moves him with the force of certainty, "It's all right." Then follows the fourth move: a powerful feeling of calm and reassurance indicating the tension of the conflict has been dissipated in a solution that is more than satisfactory; it is deeply satisfying and enduring. The interpretation is twofold. 1) Symbolic: it connects the "otherness" ("someone") with God, the comforter and the conqueror of death, "So this is what Jesus or the Holy Spirit is like." 2) Integrative (sign, symbol and action are combined): the enduring personality change issuing in new action and interest, in a "new openness to God," all of which gives evidence that the insight as interpreted cognitively satisfactorily resolved the initial conflict.

Thus the positive relationship between Divine otherness and human objectivity takes the form of a pattern according to which it may be seen that the human personality undergoes a creative act in the hands of God. The moves in this pattern apparently conform to the moves in a creative act as it might be understood in a more general study of human creativity. The distinctiveness of experiences such as that described above is that they are reported to be in response to the otherness of God and the personality itself is the recipient, not the agent, of the act of creation.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This is essentially in keeping with Paul Tillich's assertion, "The criterion which must be used to decide whether an extraordinary state of mind is ecstasy, created by the Spiritual Presence, or subjective intoxication is the manifestation of creativity in the former and the lack of it in the latter." *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), Vol. III, p. 120.

This event has what we will call an incarnational significance. That is, there is in this experience a clear-cut claim to an encounter with the sacred such that the otherness of God gives rise to a heightened capacity to deal objectively with one's own situation. It is an incarnational concept to assert that the Divine otherness confirms the historical objectivity of man. This is precisely what happens when this individual is affirmed for his present situation and opened to a new future. His language about Jesus and the Spirit is his claim to knowledge of the incarnation as it took place in the event of Jesus and as it was being partially replicated then in him. Such an encounter does not take place at the expense of what is subjective for the person; this sailor simply felt himself to be the subject of a personal power or reality of which he was not the source. This dual-focused subjectivity is what St. Paul so often spoke of in phrases such as "I, yet not I, but Christ" (Gal. 3:20). Such a heightened subjectivity, however, will not tolerate withdrawal; paradoxically the "otherness" of the sacred is apparent in it as the source of those intuitions of ultimate truth so central to the process by which God creates human nature within and for history. That is, in creating the individual the process historicizes him by heightening his capacity to deal with

the objective realities of his present situation and by opening him in an enduring way to the future.

#### IV

These are some of the problems, assumptions and hypotheses with which we are currently engaged in the study of authentic Christian experience. Our research is still exploratory, so the main point of these few paragraphs is in our invitation to you, the reader, to participate. We have already sent 300 inquiries, to which one among several responses was the case cited above. If you have known firsthand of such experiences as described here whether or not they agree in type would you write them out in a page or two and send them to us at Princeton Seminary?<sup>5</sup> Any of a great variety of conflicts may be involved leading to any number of possible resolutions extending from personality change to healing to a transformation of personal relations. May we stress again that this work is still exploratory, but we believe that as data is collected and patterns emerge, such research can be of some considerable significance for ministry in an era when religious experience has reached new heights of diversity, complexity and ambiguity.

<sup>5</sup> Loder and Laaser, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey 08540.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Christian Ethics*, by Otto A. Piper. Nelson's Library of Theology. Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., London, 1970. Pp. 407. £5.25p.

In his preface to this volume the author says that "systematic presentations in theology or philosophy must be either a young man's outburst of creative vision or the mature fruit of practical experience gained over a long life." Dr. Piper has done both in *Christian Ethics* during his lifetime. In 1928 and 1930 the *Grundlagen der evangelischen Ethik* appeared. Now, forty years later, we have his systematic *Christian Ethics*. It is mature fruit indeed. Interrupted by years of teaching and scholarship in the Biblical field, the author has returned to his earlier theme and has poured into it the ripe and balanced wisdom of a scholar who no longer needs to bounce his ideas off the positions of others. This is basically an expository volume, a setting forth of the subject matter of the field.

It is, moreover, a systematic volume, one of the few to appear in this generation. History (briefly), method, theological foundations, form of moral action, institutions of the moral order, and the spheres of the common life are all dealt with. For breadth of coverage in one volume only Emil Brunner's *The Divine Imperative* and in a different way E. Clinton Gardner's *Biblical Faith and Social Ethics* compare with it. It is not spiced with controversy. There are very few footnotes. One does not sense the passion of an advocate as one reads the pages, but rather the substantial reflection of a scholar, which can be mentally chewed with profit. There are a few brushes with modern controversies, and there is an opening section on the development of ethics, but these are the weakest part of the book, so cursive and apodictic as seriously to misrepresent some of the positions mentioned. Piper is really interested not in argument but in exposition. He sets forth, with a serene confidence that is the envy of more turbulent spirits, "the self-consciousness of Christianity as it responds to the disclosure of God's redemptive will," claiming the whole

time only to "use what dogmatics and experience have taught us."

The result is a substantial and perplexing book. One does not easily grasp the point of view which informs the whole, yet one is constantly impressed with the wisdom of the parts. Piper imposes on the reader the task of relating his argument to other strands of Christian understanding. He even—amazing for a man who has spent his teaching life with the New Testament—tends to neglect or over-generalize the Biblical sources! At the risk of misunderstanding, then, this reviewer suggests the following as some of his basic themes.

First, Piper's understanding of man does not start from the individual and his problems, but from the objective condition of man as a creature of God, conditioned in his very being by relations with God and other people, destined for the promise of the covenant, expressed in the active history of God with his people. This is a sharp contrast with the young Piper of forty years ago who began the *Grundlagen* with "The structure of the I" and moved out through the experience of remorse to an understanding of the law and thence to faith and evangelical freedom. The author in his mature wisdom still gives place to the ego, but it is subordinate. The drama of repentance receives little attention as a private crisis. Pietists here have little to work with. Its place is taken by a chapter on the perspectives and attitudes of faith and a section on worship and prayer life under the heading "participation in the covenant."

Second, Piper's understanding of God and his work is historical, social, cosmic and redemptive. All of this is embraced in the meaning and direction of the covenant relation. "The Divine kindness," the first heading under the section "God's work," expresses the spirit of this exposition well. There is no sharp division between a God of judgment and a God of grace. Creation and redemption flow into one another, so that redemption appears as the corrective creativity by which God makes possible for man that self-fulfillment in the covenant which man would spoil by himself. In no sense is this man's



work, of course, but it is a work in which man is caught up, by which he is disciplined and inspired.

Third, the moral life and the forms of the moral order have a dynamic in them which involved a continuous, often tense balance between human mental, religious and moral striving and the work of God's grace. This also contrasts in a way with the early Piper of the *Grundlagen*. There the emphasis was far more on ethical ideals and objective principles, the highest being love, which man is to obey. In another sense, however, there is continuity between the younger and the older author. In both cases discipline and striving are blended with Divine grace. Synergism is rejected, but discontinuity is not stressed. The spirit of this poise in the Christian life is well caught in the following quotation:

"The problem may be conceived of as a three-cornered relationship, embracing ourselves as Christians, God, and this world with man in its centre. According to the order in which the three factors are placed to each other, faith manifests itself as religion or as moral life. In the former case we are concerned with apprehending God through the relationship in which we stand to the cosmic reality. In the latter case we see the divine will realized through the attitude which we take toward this world in our conscience. Thereby we recognize as our special duty to promote the goal for which God has destined his creatures."

One remarkable feature of this poise is its earnestness. There is little place in Piper's ethic for rejoicing and thanksgiving, for relaxing against the wonderful gifts of God, for spontaneity in self-expression. Here he is in sharp contrast to Karl Barth (whom, inexplicably, he mentions only twice, and whose powerful work in ethics—*Church Dogmatics*: Chapter Eight, "The Command of God," Vol. II, Part 2; and Chapter Twelve, "The Command of God the Creator," Vol. III, Part 4—he does not even mention in his bibliography) whose whole perspective is based on commandment as promise and ethics as freedom under grace. On the other hand he has clearly learned also from the theological ethos which Barth has influenced. This becomes evident when he turns to social ethics and the institutions of the common life.

These institutions are, he says, "not static structures but rather social dynamisms." They have functions; they change. They can be challenged in any part. The only limit is that the Christian will continue to be responsible for institutional life. He will not imagine that the world can move toward God's purposes without structures, despite the extremism of some Christians on this point during the history of the church.

Finally, Piper is an ecumenist, with a deep sense of the reality of the church universal, and a basic rejection of individualism and sectarianism in Christian life. Once again there are no ultimate structures. Charismatic leadership has often carried the witness of the Holy Spirit in the common life against the established institutions. But the Spirit is never divorced from the Church, and never irrelevant to the institutions of congregation, synod, mission board, or World Council of Churches. A whole chapter is devoted to the end of this work to "Ethics and the Spirit" in which the interaction between the freedom of the Spirit and responsibility for witnessing institutions is traced, against the background of a broad full sense of how the tradition of the church includes and fructifies its pro-testors and renewers.

There is more in this volume. Short chapters on areas of the common life—politics, economics, civilization, family, biological order—identify them, though too briefly to make any substantial contribution. Philosophical and historical ethics do play a role throughout, and are included in a brief bibliography at the end. Most readers, however, especially Dr. Piper's former students, will turn to this book for the ripe, full balance of his theological and practical wisdom about how to be a sober, responsible Christian in the whole church for the whole world today.

CHARLES C. WEST

*The Groundwork of Christian Ethics*, by N.H.G. Robinson. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1972. Pp. 336. \$7.95.

In this work, as in that of Dr. Piper, we have the fruit of long years of study and teaching. Dr. Robinson, Professor at St. Andrews University, Scotland, treats us to a

critical study of most of the major trends in both theological and philosophical ethics of modern times, with some attention to historical background as well. For sheer comprehensiveness it ranks with Edward L. Long's now standard work, *A Survey of Christian Ethics*, though with much less attention to the greater American thinkers (e.g., Reinhold Niebuhr, H. R. Niebuhr, Paul Ramsey, James Gustafson) except for Paul Lehmann, and with more material on the modern British philosophical ethicists. It is, as the *Times Literary Supplement* aptly put it, "a closely argued and thoroughly professional study."

Dr. Robinson seems to do more than describe, however. Picking his way with careful criticism among his many subjects, he tries to define a middle position, between an ethics of objective standards and of existentialist subjectivity, and between a theological ethic which simply builds on philosophy and one which repudiates philosophical ethics altogether. He favors no extremes. He finds no position he can make his own. Methodologically he is convinced that the Christian ethicist must start with the efforts of the philosophical ethicists to define and give direction to the moral consciousness of man in general. He bases this theologically in the *imago dei* in man which he understands as a created direction in human life toward fellowship with God which is expressed in both his rational and his moral sense. It is "an endowment which carries with it the possibility of morality and rationality, but an endowment always *within the sphere of a divine activity of calling and invitation, of revelation and self-disclosure*. It is in other words an endowment *within a relationship* to God, established by God in grace from his side." (Robinson's italics.) The author objects to Thomist and Neo-Kantian ethics on the one side and to Barth and Brunner on the other because he finds them too static in their concept of human nature. The former put too much weight on reason or the moral sense as human capacities. The latter, especially Barth, see all reality so exclusively in Christ that the ethics of redemption and the ethics of creation are merged, and the ethicist is left with the problem of trying to account for morality at all apart from revelation.

At this point the reviewer must share his bias and his confusion. Robinson is at his

best in the analysis and critique of natural morality, and at those places, especially in the two final chapters, and in his discussion of the *imitatio Christi*, where he sets forth the dynamic of God's calling and covenant leading, overcoming and transforming human ideas of the good toward that fellowship in love which he intends. He is at his worst in trying to defend against Barth, Brunner, Lehmann, Bonhoeffer and even Wingren, the proposition that morality "is not the product, but the indispensable presupposition of the Christian revelation and the Christian Gospel." The problem is that he misunderstands, despite careful reading and analysis, what these "neo-Protestant" theologians are doing. He cannot recognize them, therefore, as the theological comrades they are in his enterprise.

The root of this misunderstanding lies in Robinson's failure to face the issue which was central to the world of these colleagues: the use of religious and moral ideas and practices to buttress and justify the interests of this or that grouping of human beings—in other words the problem of ideology. Karl Marx's blistering and largely justified attack on (Christian!) religion; the experience of idealistic socialists (including Christian ones) choosing sides according to their nation in the First World War and then shooting at each other; the "good people" filled with natural moral striving whom Bonhoeffer saw cave in before the Nazis—all these seem not to be part of Robinson's world. He does not pose the crucial question, therefore, which was forced upon the theologians of crisis: where is the authority and power, the reality, which can overcome my desire, or that of my class, my nation, or my church, to use it and distort it for my own ends? This is why Brunner points to the concrete command of God over against all the moral statements of man, why Bonhoeffer finds the desire to be good to be self-centered and Pharisaical, and why Barth and Bonhoeffer derive all ethics from the reality of the world as it is being reconciled in Jesus Christ, and allow no other standard.

Out of this basic misunderstanding come others. Robinson makes the incredible claim that Barth's ethic is static, that Bonhoeffer's mandates are too structured, and then puts as his own position almost the same dynamic, exploration of man's relation with God

guided by rough tentative structural norms which both men advocate. He advocates a dynamic, historical view of human nature, seeing it in the active relation with God's work, which is a restatement of Barth's and Lehmann's position, and then accuses them of an abstract and hypostatized concept. He finds Lehmann's concept of ethics as maturity in Christ to be too close to philosophical pragmatism by ignoring Lehmann's proclamation of a Christian context for this maturity, and then adopts this context himself as the goal of the moral life. Despite many shrewd insights, much of Robinson's treatment of modern Protestant ethics is that of a man who hears the notes but not the melody.

Nevertheless there is a theological argument between Robinson and the objects of his criticism on the Protestant side. The author ascribes the moral consciousness and moral striving in all men to the general work of God the creator, which is quite different from saying that it depends on a knowledge of God. Like James Gustafson, who argues the case ably against Barth in his *Christ and the Moral Life*, and like H. Richard Niebuhr in *The Responsible Self*, he wants to bring in Christ as the redeemer, as the deepener of the moral challenge and as the saviour in the moral predicament, but not as the source of ethics altogether. In the sphere of knowledge he sees the moral consciousness being oriented and made firm by the revealed will of God the Creator, rescued from the fragility of mere humanism. Then it is rescued from sin and made more sensitive in love by the Redeemer. In the sphere of being of course God and his action come first, through which all moral consciousness is possible. Whether it goes this way, or whether we know God first in Jesus Christ, in which light we then learn that the Creator of heaven and earth is gracious and loving, is the real issue at stake. Robinson has made a substantial contribution to the debate.

CHARLES C. WEST

*The Several Israels, and an Essay: Religion and Modern Man*, by Samuel Sandmel. Ktav Publishing House, New York, N.Y., 1971. Pp. 160. \$6.95.

The author of this book is Distinguished Service Professor of Bible and Hellenistic

Literature at Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion at Cincinnati. In this work are published the James A. Gray lectures, which were delivered by Professor Sandmel at Duke University, October 28-30, 1968. In the Preface the writer states that he has not undertaken to pass judgment on the matter of the truth of religious contentions, but only on the matter of their credibility on the part of modern man. To him the distinction appears simple enough, but he says it is difficult to convey it to some men. He maintains that men are capable of believing what is untrue and disbelieving what is true. To him it seems that truth in supernatural religion is outside the historian's province, but credibility is within it.

In the first lecture, "The Hebrew Israel," Sandmel presents an excellent résumé of the Biblical view of Israel as the covenant people, a nation chosen by God for a specific purpose. In this connection he makes an important observation on what he calls a tacit but implied doctrine of the unelect. Even though the prophets proclaimed a divine concern for other nations, the special role of Israel was not overlooked. In connection with the Exile of 586 B.C. and the return under Cyrus, Sandmel makes the point that the survival of ideas can scarcely be separated from the survival of the corporate group which is the bearer of those ideas. Reference is made to the Deutero-Isaiah's proclamation of the universal God and to a turning point in the Hebrew religion, when the relation to God was no longer predominantly a case of God and land, but God and people. The chapter closes with a challenging question whether in living situations it is possible for people to be particularistic enough to maintain an affirmative corporate identity without repudiating universalism.

Chapter II bears the title "The Christian Israel." The author recognizes early Christianity as a Jewish movement addressed to a Jewish purpose, but with the inclusion of Gentiles it lost its Jewish objective and its contours were well outside the orbit of Judaism. The author refers to a tragic side of medieval Christianity, when faith had become the elect faith and heretics had to be destroyed ruthlessly, as Church officials used their position less to preach a gospel of love than to emulate Phinehas (Num. 25: 6-8). Among other things he notes that re-



ligious conviction and loyalty to a religious heritage are quite different from acquiescence to inherited formulations.

The topic under discussion in Lecture III is "The State of Israel." In this connection the writer claims that he is a non-Zionist, who is also passionately concerned for the State of Israel. He considers theologically what happens when a particular people comes to be conceived of as the unelect and lives under conditions of unelection. In this chapter he gives a brief account of what Jewish life was like in the European ghetto, where the walls were strong enough to hold the Jews within, but powerless to keep out the persecutor. Passing references are made to the Jewish migrations to this country, the Yiddish language, the revival of Hebrew as a living tongue, and the development of Zionism with its culmination in the State of Israel. The minister who is interested in Jewish-Christian relations will derive much profit from reading this chapter.

The fourth lecture has a question as its title: "The True Israel?" In speaking of election, the author notes that only occasionally does an enclave of humanity, which asserts itself to be the chosen people, proceed to declare that God has chosen it. He recognizes that the doctrine of election can be secularized, but in such a case it lacks the challenge and motivation of the Biblical doctrine. To Sandmel the unity of humanity is a greater concern than the State of Israel. In the end, however, the interrogation point of the title remains. How are we to interpret the Songs of the Servant of Yahweh (Is. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12)? The goal of true religion does not end in a mere humanitarianism. Yet the parish minister will find numerous challenges in this book and gain new perspectives from reading these lectures.

HENRY S. GEHMAN

*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, by Bruce M. Metzger. United Bible Societies, London and New York, 1971. Pp. xxxi + 775. \$2.55 + 5% (25¢ minimum, mailing costs).

This is a volume which every student concerned with understanding, as well as

translating, the New Testament, regardless of the degree of proficiency he may have achieved, will wish to own for constant use, for in it he will find, ready to hand, materials assembled with the thorough care for which Professor Metzger is so widely and properly acclaimed. And he will be able to add it to his library without the financial strain so often, unfortunately, imposed by the fantastic prices demanded by commercial publishers. This volume, impeccably printed on excellent stock, and attractively bound to match the Bible Societies' *The Greek New Testament*, is priced at a figure within the easy reach of all.

The volume is a companion volume to the forthcoming third edition of the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament*, edited by Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren. Its chief purpose, which Dr. Metzger constantly and properly stresses, is to set forth and explain the reasons which led this Committee to print the NT text as they did, adopting certain variant readings for inclusion, often with square brackets to indicate uncertainty, and to relegate other readings to the apparatus. Thus the volume is, as its title clearly indicates, a textual commentary. It is an invaluable help to the student confronted with various readings, each buttressed by a list of symbols too often far from familiar to him and rarely usable. Metzger's running discussion of the comparative weight of each variant considered by the Committee on the basis not only of the several types of text but of scribal habits and practices, puts the student in the position to understand, not merely blindly follow, the choices of scholars of experience and sound judgment.

In addition, for most of the readings discussed there is a clear indication of the certainty or indecision of the several members of the Committee for the particular reading accepted. Not only is there a constant mention of the majority or minority vote for this variant or that, but by the use of the letters A, B, C, and D, appended in brackets after the reading adopted, the certainty or its lack is made clear. And occasionally a member of the Committee has a minority report, indicating his adverse vote to the majority's decision. Not infrequently these minority reports, notably several by Metzger himself, commend themselves very definitely to me.

By no means all variant readings to be



found preserved in the host of NT manuscripts were indicated in the text volume or considered in this commentary. Many variants to be found in such critical editions as those edited by Westcott and Hort, Tischendorf, Nestle, or von Soden are not mentioned. Rather, attention has been directed deliberately to those readings likely to be freighted with exegetical importance to the translator and student. In addition to the 1440 sets of variants supplied in the apparatus of the Bible Societies' edition of the text, all of which are here discussed and justified, are an additional 600 sets of readings scattered through the NT, which, while not indicated in the text volume, may prove of interest and value to the student. Many of these latter variants have no slightest claim to be counted in the long lost "original text," but for one reason or another may prove of interest. Among such may be mentioned the variants due to scribal confusion and irresponsible alteration of the Aramaic *ταλιθα κοιμ* (Mark 5:41), the names of the two crucified thieves (Luke 23:32), the description of the actual resurrection of Jesus which Old Latin codex Bobiensis (it<sup>k</sup>) introduces at Mark 16:4, or the name of the anonymous Rich Man, introduced by some copyists due to their *horror vacui* at Luke 16:19.

Many of these 600 additional variants occur in the very full discussion of readings in Acts, due to the wide difference between the two basic types of early text, namely, the Alexandrian and the Western. This lengthy section of the Commentary, pp. 259-503, provides material conveniently assembled and appraised in a form not to be found elsewhere, save through laborious search in many volumes not likely to be easily at hand.

At the end of the section devoted to Luke is an extended note on what Hort styled "Western non-interpolations" and which since his day have regularly been printed in double brackets, if allowed at all in the critical text. With the acquisition of the Bodmer Papyri testimony to the early Alexandrian type of text and to the recent analysis styled *Redaktionsgeschichte*, it was deemed wise by the Committee to consider and evaluate the claims of each of these isolated nine passages separately.

The second edition of the *Greek New Testament* showed occasional readings reflecting the changed opinion of the majority of

the Editorial Committee. The forthcoming third edition contains additional alterations. For example, the square brackets about the words *καὶ ἀνεφέρετο εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν* (Luke 24:51), which stood in the first edition, are now removed, despite the preference of a minority of the Committee, and the reading, although marked "D," is accepted. Similarly the *pericope adulterae* (John 7:53-8:11), which in the first edition was appended in double brackets at the end of the text of John, now by vote of the majority of the Committee is printed, of course in double brackets, at its traditional place following John 7:52. Perhaps this was a wise decision—at least there is no uncertainty indicated as to its non-Johannine nature, for the statement is clear that the Committee "was unanimous that the passage was originally no part of the Fourth Gospel"—but the comment (p. 220) that "the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity" will seem to some students a bit surprising.

While this is basically a textual commentary, nonetheless not infrequently detailed comments of a definitely historical sort are introduced, notably, the paragraphs about the meaning of *Ἑλληριστάς* (Acts 11:20) on pp. 386-89 and of the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25) on pp. 429-34, will prove of interest and value to many students.

All told, the volume is a balanced, meticulously accurate report of why the editors acted as they did in the preparation of the basic text of the NT and of its variants, enlivened by the listing and discussion of many minor variants with which for the most part most readers, students of the NT though they may well be, are unfamiliar. Occasionally the scholar may dissent at the majority decision, as did some of the Committee themselves at times. He may wish that readings for which no variant is suggested had been included. For example, I could have wished the variant *πόλιν* for *κόμην* in Luke 9:52 had been considered worthy of comment, for to me it is the probable original reading. But by and large he must agree that "balanced" and "honest" are the terms to be applied both to the Committee's painstaking work and to Metzger's scrupulously accurate and unslanded reports of why they acted as they did. There is no slightest indication, so far as I have been able to see—and my reading of the work has not been hasty

or casual—of any definite slanting—either theological or historical—of the evidence. Had there been any such desire, it would most certainly have been checked and excluded by the majority of the Committee. It is a piece of work involving an incredible amount of time and labor, and the scholarly world should welcome it with gratitude.

MORTON S. ENSLIN

The Dropsie University

*The Formation of the Christian Bible*, by Hans von Campenhausen. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, Pa., 1972. Pp. xiii + 342. \$10.95.

The growth and recognition of the canon of the New Testament is one of the most important developments in the thought and practice of the early Church, yet history is absolutely silent as to how, when, and by whom it was brought about. In the absence of extant contemporary references to so significant a development, not a few conjectural reconstructions have been proposed. Thus, von Harnack supposed that bishops of Asia Minor in agreement with the Church at Rome deliberately drew up and settled the canon, although we have no historical record of such a momentous decision. Jülicher, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of *anagnōsis*, or the "[public] reading," of apostolic letters and other early Christian writings along with Old Testament documents, already regarded as canonical, with the consequent impartation of the authority of the latter to the former. According to Westcott, the formation of the canon was among the first instinctive acts of the Christian society, resting upon the intuitive insight of devout believers, and only later was ratified by synodical bodies as the authoritative standard of appeal in controversies.

Von Campenhausen, instead of producing a history of the canon in the usual sense (that is, an examination oriented to the fortunes of the individual biblical books and groups of writings), deals broadly with problems relating to the varied factors that led to both the composition and the canonization of certain Christian books which were ultimately received alongside of those of the Old Testament.

Accordingly, the author first investigates the relationship between Jesus and the Mosaic Law, as reflected in the Synoptic Gospels, in contrast to the relationship between Law and the written word in the first century Gentile-Christian church, as reflected in Paul, Luke, and the Gospel of John. It was Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, who, by inaugurating the concept of *Heilsgeschichte*, was largely responsible for the development of those presuppositions that led to a differentiation between an "Old" and a "New" Testament (pp. 36f.). For Luke also, as for Paul, the Old Testament was from God and contains divine revelation, but it became for him, far more than for Paul, prophetic in all its parts (pp. 47f.). Luke not only freed the Jewish Bible from the Law, but at the same time definitely determined the theological place that it was to occupy within the Christian church—thus bringing to a conclusion in his own way the orientation established by Paul (p. 50). In the Fourth Gospel the evangelist draws a contrast between the Law, given by God through Moses, which is a testimony, and the reality to which Moses bore witness, namely the grace and truth which came through Jesus Christ. In an ironical and paradoxical way the Jewish scribes, though they interpreted the Old Testament in an orthodox manner, were blind to its inner, spiritual significance, which according to John is revealed only to the Christian believer (pp. 58ff.).

Von Campenhausen turns next to the crisis in the second century over the Old Testament canon. For more than a century the Christian church possessed the same "canon" as the Jewish synagogue. Yet, at the same time, primitive Christianity is by no means to be described as a "religion of the Book"; it was the religion of the Spirit and of the living Christ (p. 63). As Christianity became more and more predominantly a Gentile-oriented religion, the problem arose of what should be done with the Old Testament, about which more and more new converts knew nothing. It is in this connection that von Campenhausen examines the first Epistle of Clement, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Epistle of Barnabas. In Ignatius and later in Gnosticism (Basilides, Valentinus, and the Valentinians), the position and use of the Old Testament became still more problematical (pp. 71ff.). Such tendencies, however,

were finally curbed by Justin Martyr, who set forth an orthodox interpretation of the entire Old Testament as a divinely given testimony to the life and teaching of Jesus (pp. 88ff.).

It is in such a framework that von Campenhausen next takes up what he calls the prehistory of the New Testament canon. In his view, prior to the middle of the second century no Christian document or group of documents enjoyed canonicity in the church in the same sense that the Old Testament was accepted as normative. For Paul, as for Luke, Papias, and the gospel tradition within Gnosticism, the standard of Christian belief and conduct continued to be found in the traditions about Jesus' deeds and words. It was the whole complex of such traditions, congealed in the gospel-literature, that formed the nucleus of what later became the New Testament. (This view stands against the opinion of Goodspeed and others that it was the Pauline Epistles, and the opinion of Windisch that it was the book of Revelation, that constituted the nucleus around which other Christian writings gravitated to form the New Testament.) Instead of emphasizing the role played by Marcion as the catalyst that prompted the church to define the limits of the canon, von Campenhausen thinks that it was Montanism (that enthusiastic sect of Asia Minor that claimed to be the recipient of new revelations from the Holy Spirit) which forced the church to react against the "innumerable books" of the Montanist prophets and to delimit the canon of Scriptures, through which alone God speaks authoritatively to his people (pp. 221ff.).

It was finally, according to von Campenhausen, only in post-Irenaeus theology, after the beginning of the third century, that orthodox theology came to acknowledge a two-fold canon of Scripture: an Old and a New Testament. Prominent at this stage were Hippolytus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and particularly Origen—who gave a significant place in his dogmatic treatise *De principiis* to a discussion of the normative function of the Scriptures in Christian theology.

Such, in brief, is an outline of the main stages through which, according to von Campenhausen, the Christian church came to acknowledge the principle and the con-

tent of the New Testament canon. Most of the territory covered is familiar enough; what is new is the author's consistent attention directed toward the interplay of influences that led to the creation of the "Old" Testament vis-à-vis the rise of the "New" Testament. Despite the broad canvass of his material, von Campenhausen limits his attention to the historical milieu of the early church; he is not concerned with later discussions about the theological significance of the canon. Even within this more narrowly delimited area, however, there are certain over-simplifications. Although Montanism can, doubtless, be called "the final stage of the formation of the Canon" (p. 232), von Campenhausen does not face the question of what influences in areas outside the direct influence of Montanism (such as Syria and Egypt) operated to produce a "closed" canon. One would also have expected to hear more about the influence of persecution upon the delimitation of the canon-situations in which it became imperative for Christians, lay and clerical alike, to know which books could be surrendered to the imperial police without sacrilege, and which could not. In short, the influences that led to the canonization of the New Testament were even more complex and varied than the reader of von Campenhausen is likely to suspect.

Although the range of literature cited by von Campenhausen is broad and rich, one is surprised that he ignores significant contributions made by twentieth-century Dutch scholars, such as those of J. de Zwaan, F. W. Grosheide, and H. N. Ridderbos.

BRUCE M. METZGER

*The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, Introduction, Texts, and Translations by Herbert Musurillo. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1972. Pp. lxxiii + 379. £6.

In 1954 Father Musurillo, Professor of Classics at Fordham University, published an authoritative edition of the texts of the so-called Acts of the Pagan Martyrs (reviewed in the BULLETIN, XLIX, No. 2, Oct., 1955). These accounts, which extend from the reign of Tiberius (A.D. 14-37) down to the reign of Caracalla (A.D. 211-217), appear to be based

on official court minutes of the trials of notable Alexandrian Greeks who were punished and persecuted by the Roman authorities. Many of the texts are violently propagandist and anti-Roman in tone, having been reworked in the interests of enhancing their literary vividness.

Now a corresponding volume has come from the same editor and through the same press, this time in the series of Oxford Early Christian Texts, edited by Dr. Henry Chadwick, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford. In accord with the object of the series, the volume contains the Greek or Latin text of twenty-eight accounts of Christian martyrs on the left-hand page, with an English translation on the right-hand page. Musurillo provides a helpful Introduction to the corpus as a whole, as well as occasional textual comments at the foot of most pages. The work, as one would have expected, is characterized by clarity and care.

To some slight extent paralleling the corpus of the Acts of the Pagan Martyrs, the body of literature known as the Acts of Christian Martyrs is an extensive and important body of early patristic literature. Ranging from reliable eye-witness accounts to works of imaginative fiction, the *Acta* narrate the arrest, trial, and execution of those who died for their faith in the first centuries after Christ. The collection offered here includes all the authentic Christian Acts from the earliest times down to Diocletian (A.D. 284-305).

Not only is the reader brought into contact through this literature with the kinds and extent of early Roman persecutions of Christians, but these texts also throw light on the beliefs and practices traditional in the early congregations. Both pastor and student alike will find much of interest in Musurillo's fine edition.

BRUCE M. METZGER

*The Book of Proverbs* (The Cambridge Bible Commentary: New English Bible) by R. N. Whybray. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 1972. Pp. 197. \$6.95.

Just about a decade after the appearance of several small commentaries on the book of Proverbs by E. Jones (Torch series, 1961),

D. Kidner (Tyndale series, 1964), and J. Coert Rylaarsdam (Layman's series, 1964), Cambridge University Press has issued R. N. Whybray's commentary containing the complete text of the New English Bible (NEB). The stated purpose of the series is to present the main findings of Biblical scholarship, the historical background of the text, and the main theological issues. In this book the author has made many helpful comments on the text of the NEB often suggesting alternative translations of proverbs which have been paraphrased by the translators. He also provides an up-to-date assessment of the background of the wisdom of Israel as well as numerous parallels to Israelite proverbs found in Egyptian wisdom literature. The volume also provides a useful list of subjects and the corresponding verses in Proverbs where they are found, a general index, and a brief bibliography.

Wisdom literature offers a unique reward to the reader. In modern times it has often been ignored, its advice being regarded as too banal and its religious hope as too optimistic. However, the reader of Proverbs will be surprised at the relevance of much of this ancient lore. It represents a literature which has not only been able to transcend national boundaries in its own time, but it also has the power to reach across time and address us with pertinent questions. The characters which the book parades before us, the hapless youth, the boasting buyer, or the nagging wife, are a delightful but sad burlesque of human nature. What a novelist must devote page after page of introduction, climax, and denouement to tell us, a wise man can accomplish in six words. One might say that a proverb "tells it like it is," whether the subject is the wise man or the wisacre, the sage or the silly, the master or the moron.

The purpose of this ancient book is, however, far from frivolous. As Whybray asserts in his introduction, it shows us a people wrestling with the very problem which faces us today: how to live in the world with one's feet planted firmly on the soil of earth while at the same time acknowledging the claims and guidance of God. According to the author Israelite wisdom was part of an international movement, and this fact is offered as the theological rationale for the absence of the specific themes of Israel's faith, such as the Exodus and the Conquest of Canaan, from



the book. Echoing a thesis proposed by Rudolph Kittel, he asserts that in its inception the wisdom of Israel was dominated by the secular ideal of success. This eudaemonism, which he calls the "Order" of reality, pledged to the just man material rewards, long life, and happiness. Gradually, however, this secular wisdom was absorbed into and subordinated to the chief religious concern of the pious Israelite, the fear of the Lord, "obedience to the will of God made known through the religion of Israel" (p. 16). In his analysis of chapters 1-9 Whybray shows how this was accomplished by expanding the instructional materials which did not associate wisdom with God into specifically religious discourses. The older wisdom of Israel, contained in the middle sections of the book, he attributes to various sources. In some cases the wise men of the royal court have used Egyptian materials.

Because of the severe limitation of space for commentary upon the various aspects of individual collections of proverbs, Whybray's remarks are primarily useful for the light which they shed upon the translations and interpretations of the NEB. In Proverbs 5 and 7 he accepts the NEB interpretation of the Hebrew word "strange woman" as an adulteress. This results in an excessively literal interpretation of this character who has been aptly called "Dame Folly" (NEB: "Lady Stupidity"!) and who has been introduced into the book as the counterpart of the female figure "Wisdom." In Proverbs 25:22, which speaks of heaping coals of fire upon the head of your enemy by returning good for evil, he makes reference neither to the Demotic penitential rite in which the suppliant carried a brazier of coals upon his head, nor the proposal of L. Ramorson (*Biblica* 51:234) that this clause be rendered in parallelism to the two preceding clauses "If you yourself bring some coals for his fire" (the Lord will reward you). In many instances, however, he wisely suggests alternate and more literal translations which more accurately reflect the Hebrew text and which render the proverbs in more literal phraseology.

With respect to the religious and theological issues arising out of the book of Proverbs, the discussion is very limited. Whybray's resolution of the question of the relation of Proverbs to the rest of the Old Testa-

ment does not represent any advance upon what has previously been asserted, i.e., it is a book which is international in scope. Vital connections to the history and institutions of Israel which suggest possible relationships are omitted. For instance, the relation between the wisdom movement and the institution of kingship, particularly the Davidic covenant, is not developed in any way to show the real place which wisdom found in the religion of Israel.

Also, his analysis of the alleged secularism and eudaemonism of the older collections of proverbs is too facile. The appeal to "fear of the Lord" is not only found throughout the book of Proverbs but is also present in other extra-Biblical wisdom which preceded the wisdom movement in Israel. This suggests that from the very beginning the wise men of Israel had their own unique understanding of the relation between God and the world, one which was at times at variance with other religious conceptions such as those represented by the prophets. Although the question of the justice of God does not emerge in the stark tragic form which the book of Job assumes, it is in my estimation more than "hinted" at in the book. The promise that the just man would be rewarded in this life is qualified in a number of proverbs. The problem of the mystery of iniquity, the very irrationality of the inner forces of man's psyche which make evil enticing to him, and the moral paradoxes making the dispensation of justice an enigma to the wise men are probed in a whole series of proverbs in chapters 16-22. Unfortunately, Whybray does not discuss the background and differences between the various collections of proverbs and therefore the older wisdom appears more homogeneous than it really is.

Finally, a single statement of advice which the author gives to his readers at the beginning of the commentary provides an opportunity to test the meaning of wisdom and its place in our lives. Whybray asserts that wisdom lacks the moral earnestness of the prophets. Yet is there not an urgency in the appeal of wisdom? She beckons at the crossroads, by the wayside, at the top of the hill, and even at the entry to the open gate. She says, "Men, it is to you I call, I appeal to every man." To hear the appeal and to discern its meaning for our lives is the discovery of wisdom. Whether it is urgent and whether

it is morally earnest is for the reader to determine. To discover this one needs to make a good beginning, and for this the commentary by R. N. Whybray is adequate.

GLENDON E. BRYCE

*Church Union at Midpoint*, by Paul A. Crow, Jr. and William Jerry Boney. Association Press, New York, 1972. Pp. 253. \$7.95.

In December, 1960, Dr. Eugene C. Blake, then Stated Clerk of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., preached a historic sermon in Grace Episcopal Cathedral, San Francisco, entitled "A Proposal Toward the Reunion of Christ's Church." In this sermon Dr. Blake invited four of the leading "standard brand" Protestant denominations—namely the United Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ, and the Episcopal Church—to enter into negotiations with a view to their eventual organic union. His invitation was accepted by all four of these churches; in 1962 their official delegates held the first meeting of what came to be known as The Consultation on Church Union (COCU); and by 1967 the number of participating churches had grown to nine—three of them being Black. The COCU negotiators met in plenary session once every year; and by 1970 they had agreed upon what was called "A Plan of Union for the Church of Christ Uniting," which they voted to transmit to "the member churches and to all Christians for study and response, seeking their assistance in the further development and completion of this Plan of Union."

This book, entitled *Church Union at Midpoint*, consists of essays by 17 contributors, all of whom are interested, and some of whom are active participants, in the COCU movement. It is edited by Paul A. Crow, Jr., Secretary of COCU, and W. J. Boney, Professor of Theology in the School of Theology, Virginia Union University. It may be described as a commentary on the COCU movement, and particularly on the Plan of Union. It consists of four parts. Part One, entitled "A Decade in Perspective," summarizes succinctly and factually the history of the COCU movement from Dr. Blake's sermon to

the issuance of the Plan of Union. Part Two, entitled "The Present Situation: Problems and Challenges," and Part Three, "COCU and the Future of Ecumenism," seek to examine the Plan as it has been presented for consideration to the churches. Part Four, entitled "The Way Forward: Next Steps," suggests certain practical measures which the churches may take at once, in order to express and deepen their sense of unity, without waiting for approval of the Plan by national denominational judicatories.

It might have been expected that such a semi-official volume as this would give uncritical approval to and commendation of, the Plan; but in fact this is not the case at all. Virtually every objection which has been raised to the COCU Plan by its critics in the church is named and considered here. Thus, the Plan allegedly seeks to set up a vast super-church; its proposals for church government give Bishops too much power and local congregations too little; it does not give adequate recognition to minority groups, particularly the Blacks, women and youth; and it seeks organic unity among the churches when the action has moved from structural change to social witness and involvement. Each of these objections is examined coolly and fairly, and whatever substance there is in them is candidly admitted. But of course these essays also seek to underline and expound the clear merits of the COCU Plan—its solid theological grounding; its desire to decentralize decision-making and money control; its attempts to reconcile honest differences on disputed questions, for example in the matter of church government; and its focus on the servant role of the church.

It is to be hoped that the COCU Plan, perhaps modified in certain respects, will be implemented by at least a majority of the nine negotiating churches involved in it. But whether or not, the Plan deserves the most serious and well-informed consideration throughout the churches of America. Since this book will contribute markedly to such discussion, it deserves the most careful study.

NORMAN V. HOPE

*Ecumenical Progress: A Decade of Change in the Ecumenical Movement 1961-71*, by Norman Goodall. Oxford

University Press, New York, N.Y., 1972. Pp. 173. \$10.25.

In 1961 Norman Goodall published a book entitled *The Ecumenical Movement: What it is and What it does*. In 1964 a second edition of this volume was issued, which contained supplementary material based on the actions of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches which had been held in New Delhi in 1961. Towards the end of the 1960's the question of a third edition came up. Then, however, Dr. Goodall decided that not a revised edition, but a new book, was necessary in order to do something like adequate justice to the ecumenical developments of the decade. In 1972 this new book appeared, under the title *Ecumenical Progress: A Decade of Change in the Ecumenical Movement 1961-71*.

Dr. Goodall's new book concentrates on developments connected with the World Council of Churches, of which he served for a time as Assistant General Secretary. Important changes in personnel took place during the 1960's, the most important of which was the retirement of Dr. W. A. Visser't Hooft as General Secretary and the appointment of Doctor Eugene C. Blake as his successor. There were also other changes of great importance. Ever since the World Council of Churches had been formally inaugurated in 1948, the International Missionary Council (founded in 1921) had been "in association" with it. In 1961 these two bodies merged; and this, of course, meant changes in the World Council of Churches' understanding of Christian mission and the role of the World Council of Churches in promoting it. In 1958 the International Missionary Council had established a Theological Education Fund, financed heavily by Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. This, the largest single undertaking conducted by the International Missionary Council, continued to operate during the 1960's, and is now working on a program which is not expected to be completed before 1976.

During the 1960's the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, originally a joint project of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches, continued and even expanded its multifarious activities in the field of social amelioration and reform. It sponsored a rather contro-

versial World Conference on Church and Society at Geneva in 1966; and its concern for Christian social involvement found pointed expression at the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Uppsala in 1968.

The Faith and Order movement had held an important conference at Lund in 1952, at which something of a breakthrough was achieved in procedures and methods. This movement continued its work throughout the 1960's, one highlight of which was the conference which it held at Montreal in 1963. In addition, important local conferences on Faith and Order were held at Nottingham, England in 1964 and Hong Kong in 1966.

During the 1960's Regional Conferences were organized. The earliest of these, the East Asia Christian Conference, had been officially established in 1959; the All African Conference of Churches came into existence in 1963 and the Pacific Conference of Churches in 1966. These regional organizations have provided a needed measure of decentralization for some of the decision making and practical activities of the World Council of Churches.

The World Council of Churches has undergone some internal changes as well. The Uppsala Assembly of 1968 instructed its Central Committee to provide for a fresh re-appraisal of its structure and program within two years; and the recommendations of this committee are now being implemented, so that activities hitherto covered by a number of divisions and departments are now being grouped under three major program units—Faith and Witness, Justice and Service, Education and Communication. It is hoped that by this re-structuring the World Council will be able to function more effectively and economically.

In all its activities during the 1960's the World Council has found a new and welcome attitude of cooperation from the Roman Catholic Church. This church not only sent official observers to the World Council Assembly at New Delhi in 1961 and at Uppsala in 1968, but in 1965 joined with the World Council in creating a Joint Working Group whose task was "to work out the principles which should be observed in further collaboration and the methods which should be used"; and in 1969 Pope Paul VI visited the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva



and engaged in consultation and worship with representatives of the World Council.

It was natural that Dr. Goodall's treatment of his subject would focus on the World Council of Churches and its activities and connections. In order to give a fuller and more complete picture, he might have presented some account of ecumenical activities not connected with the World Council—for example, local experiments in ecumenicity which have been taking place in many parts of the Christian world. As it is, however, he gives a clear, factual, and well-informed presentation of one important aspect of the ecumenical movement during the 1960's.

The price of this book is \$10.25. This seems excessive for a volume of fewer than 200 pages, even in this inflationary age.

NORMAN V. HOPE

*Religious Liberty in the United States*, by Elwyn A. Smith. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, Pa., 1972. Pp. 386. \$10.95.

In this book Elwyn A. Smith analyzes and expounds what he calls "the thought of Americans whose social leadership and intellectual work have proved consequential in fashioning the laws and customs that institutionalized religious liberty" (p. IX), during the two centuries which have elapsed since the United States achieved independence.

He expounds his theme under three categories:

First he considers what he calls the "Separatist tradition," by which he means the work of those thinkers, mostly Protestant, who have sought to explore the meaning of the separation of church and state. He deals with the Baptist leader Isaac Backus, of Middleborough, Massachusetts, who sought to have his fellow Baptists accorded full religious liberty. He then considers the disestablishment of the Anglican Church and the separation of church and state in Virginia, where the Deist, Thomas Jefferson, gave powerful help. Thereafter he examines the contribution of such republican theocrats in Connecticut as Timothy Dwight, Lyman Beecher and Nathaniel Taylor. He then goes on to deal with Horace Bushnell's theory of human society as an organic unity, a view-

point which helped to spark the Social Gospel Movement of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth. He concludes this section with the following observation, "In no generation since Europeans arrived on the eastern coast of North America has the search for the realization of religious liberty in an acceptable order of church-state relations ceased. At present the separationist posture does not exclude cooperation. The dynamic of change within the separatist tradition is neither toward increased divorce of religion from the law nor toward their marriage, but seeks a discriminate and cautiously defined collaboration. Protestant bodies approve the notion of "neutrality" for government, provided it be friendly; most fear that such neutrality may become nothing more than secular, a term construed by the moderate separatist tradition as tending toward hostility to religion" (p. 154).

The second part of Dr. Smith's book examines what he calls "the Catholic tradition"—i.e., the thought of influential Roman Catholic thinkers with respect to the American church-state system. He points out that, since the foundation of the Republic, Roman Catholics have constituted a minority of the citizenry, and a minority whose members have labored under the handicap of explaining how their allegiance to the Pope as spiritual leader can be reconciled with their political loyalty as citizens of the United States. Dr. Smith expounds the views of such Catholic thinkers as John Carroll, the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Baltimore, Orestes Brownson, and the recent Jesuit thinker John Courtney Murray. Murray sought to interpret papal utterances, especially those of the nineteenth century, which seemingly opposed the American separation of church and state, in their historical context, pointing out that it was mainly anti-Catholic governments in Europe against which these papal pronouncements were directed; and he argued that the American constitution clearly limited governmental power and provided broad exemptions from government's jurisdiction, thus allowing the Church full freedom to do its divinely-appointed work. This limitation of government power in the United States combined with a broad consensus on moral values—in Murray's judgment—did away with the need for any religious establishment; and this system was one with which



Catholics could fully cooperate and to which they are fully loyal.

Thirdly Dr. Smith analyzes what he calls "the constitutional tradition," by which he means the manner in which church-state relations have been dealt with by the United States Supreme Court in such matters as conscientious objection to participation in war, exemption of churches from taxation, and aid to parochial schools. Such issues as these have come up for decision by the Supreme Court increasingly since 1940; and the question which has thus been posed is this: "Where is the wall—or line, or balance, between protection of religion and the rightful prerogatives of the state?" (pp. 289-290). The conclusion to which he arrives is this, that "the state engages solely to guarantee the freedom of all from mutual interference and from its own intervention. This new relation involves no alienation or estrangement of the separated partner from the state. Largely because of the vitality of both religion and government in American society, the struggle to define the separation of church and state continues. There is, however, no question of the banishment of a relation between church and state in the United States" (p. 362).

This book contains a wealth of information and documentation on the important question with which it deals. It will doubtless take rank as a well-informed and even authoritative exposition of its subject. It would, however, have been improved, if it had been written in a clearer and simpler style, and if it had been more carefully proof-read.

NORMAN V. HOPE

*Treatise on Grace and Other Posthumously Published Writings by Jonathan Edwards*, ed. by Paul Helm. James Clarke & Co., London, 1971. Pp. 131. \$5.00.

The publishing history of the works of Jonathan Edwards continues its rather intriguing and circuitous course with the recent publication of his *Treatise on Grace and Other Posthumously Published Writings* edited by Paul Helm. Mr. Helm has brought together and briefly introduced the historical, theological and philosophical background of

three important treatises that contain the essence of Edwards' treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity. Each of these treatises has been published previously, the *Treatise on Grace*, by Alexander Grosart in his *Selections from the Unpublished Writings of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh, 1865); *Observations Concerning the Scripture Oeconomy of the Trinity and the Covenant of Redemption*, by E. C. Smyth (New York, 1880); *An Unpublished Essay of Edwards on the Trinity*, by G. P. Fisher (New York, 1903). But each of these treatises is rather scarce and none of them is contained in the standard *Works of Edwards*. The doctrine of the Trinity is more than incidental to Edwards' thought and certainly to the subsequent history of New England theology; therefore, we can greet this compilation of his views as a welcome addition to the Edwards corpus.

Of special interest are the Augustinian flavor of Edwards' views on the Trinity in his *Treatise on Grace*, and his firm avowal of the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son in his *Observations Concerning the Trinity and the Covenant of Redemption*. Edwards' firm grasp of the history of doctrine spare him from the accusation brought against New England Theology that it was "parochial." The scope of his vision, the breadth of his command of Christian thought and the depth of his originality are in evidence in these essays, each of which points to the Trinity as that which bears witness in Edwards' thought to the glory of God and "a new sense of things," finally not so much as a doctrine as an experience, "a sense of the heart" that man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

BRUCE STEPHENS

*Worship in Crisis*, by Henry E. Horn. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, Pa., 1972. Pp. 154. \$3.75.

The initial sentence in the Preface to this essay is "This book *had* to be written!" This comment anticipates the bold temper of the author's discussion as a whole. Those of us whose specialty is the preached Word within the context of worship welcome heartily the lines of thought this book embraces and are glad it has been written by a pen as pro-

ficient as Henry Horn wields. Rarely do we have such a vigorous combination of competence and timeliness in a single effort. The fortunes of the liturgical discipline have waxed and waned during the past fifty years. This period has featured a mixed pattern in the Reformed camp; it has ranged from glowing enthusiasm in the nineteen-forties over the re-discovery of our heritage to the shambles of the present decade in which theological anarchy allows everyone liturgically to do his own thing. "The consequent collapse of this whole structure so soon after its erection is what has us reeling today" (p. 8). Hence the need has been felt for some objective thinker to back off from the current carnival of balloons, graffiti, and self-appointed liturgical peacocks and slobs and to assess what has occurred by writing a few words on the ground. This book goes a long way towards filling that sober need.

The author, who is a Lutheran parish minister in Cambridge, Massachusetts, begins by acknowledging the collapse of traditional liturgical landmarks and the emergence of the concept of the worship act as a "happening." In a vivid opening chapter called "Crisis in Worship," he sketches in clear strokes the contemporary scene of liturgical experimentation. "Innovation of any kind," he writes, "seems to be proper now. One does 'his own thing' and all of this is then put together and tied in a knot. Standards for evaluation are limited to popularity; we have swallowed a mouthful of NOW" (p. 4). This has led to a polarization which some have tried to remedy through a fresh accounting of the place of imagination in worship, a revision of the language of our rites, and adoption of whatever seemed to be most popular, even "domesticating the Almighty" (p. 65). The failure of these forays individually has led to a necessary re-examination of the basic elements of liturgical renewal and an understanding of what it means to "involve the whole people in conscious acts in God's presence." "To find out who one is, one has to investigate what one has been," the author observes (p. 5). This will include a re-discovery of what constitutes the Christian experience and what the corporateness of God's people requires in order to possess its own integrity and to move in a meaningful direction. God's Word is still God's act. Its context is still human history. True worship is

inevitably a "happening" within the context of everyday life. To the extent that this happening has shape, is determinative and redemptive, will our rethinking of our liturgical posture be fruitful. "We must find," Horn asserts, "the meaning of worship in the very heart of this daily conflict" (p. 17). Indeed only in this way can we have true celebration, the celebration of the dynamic of *Christus praesens* in the midst of common life, which can "enliven our faith and inspire our hope" (p. 105).

This is not a book of neat solutions to the present liturgical crisis. It is a series of probes to alert us to the dangers of the current malaise which besets the worship of the churches. It is not a blueprint for action. It shows us, on the contrary, where action is necessary and the proper equipment and substance needed to salvage what is good presently and to guarantee the viability of what will be.

DONALD MACLEOD

*Where Cross the Crowded Ways: Prayers of A City Pastor*, by Ernest T. Campbell. Association Press, New York, N.Y., 1973. Pp. 96. \$2.95 (paper).

There are few great prayers among our preachers and leaders of worship today. There will be fewer still as our pastors become slaves to service books prepared by liturgical commissions who discourage the traditional creativity of the "free" churches. Moreover, why is skill in original public prayer so obviously absent? Quite true the models in the service books are bad, but the major reason is: too few ministers ever really work at it. This reviewer experiences a moment of painful anxiety when some preacher folds his hands upon the lectern, bends back his head, and with much immoderate fervor proceeds to inform the Almighty of all things direful and fanciful on earth and in heaven. It is common knowledge that many ministers spend hours planning a "covered dish" soirée, whereas they give to the preparation of their public prayers only the time it takes to snatch some vagrant thoughts as the choir sings the anthem.

These persons do not belong to the same school as Ernest T. Campbell of the Riverside Church, New York City. In the Pref-

ace to a new book of prayers, Dr. Campbell says:

"It should also be said that these prayers reflect the conviction that the pastoral prayer each week can be deeply meaningful if the leader takes it seriously and works at it. When a man wishes to invigorate his parish, his mind commonly turns to ways of scheduling the unusual: the weekend retreat, the visiting preacher, some musical extravaganza, a widely heralded dramatic production, a service in which strobe lights, modern sounds and updated litanies are featured, the dialog sermon.

"It is wiser, I believe, to *energize the usual* than to *schedule the unusual*—that is, to look more to doing better those functions of the ministry that are basic to our calling: leading worship, preaching the word, visiting, counseling, administering the business and program of the church. To slight these fundamental services while casting about for some gala event that will provide instant invigoration is to forget that the ordinary over the years has proved more useful to God than the spectacular. One of these 'ordinary' responsibilities, I am convinced, is the preparation of what is usually referred to as the pastoral prayer.

"I have deliberately cast these prayers in Elizabethan English. Not that the King James language is the only tongue God hears, but because I have deep misgivings about those liberties with prayer so fashionable today in which transcendence is compromised by means of grammatical and verbal intimacy with the Divine. I deem it more important that God be our Lord than our pal."

Here are forty pastoral prayers prepared for and used in the services of worship in the Riverside Church. They are classics in form and content; but more, they are indicative of real sensitivity to the congregation's needs and an intimate acquaintance with the sources of the people's help. This paperback will fill many needs. Many of us will take courage from the evidence that the day of great Christian praying is not over. Sloppy liturgicists will feel a sense of judgment upon their notion that in average worship "anything will do." Teachers of worship will find here both inspiration and pedagogical help in having one of these prayers read each day at the opening of class sessions.

DONALD MACLEOD

*Studies in Texts*, 3 Vols., by Joseph Parker. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1973. Pp. 1268. \$16.95.

Generations of preachers have read with increasing respect and profit the sermons of Joseph Parker. Founder of the City Temple—London's great center of non-conformity—Dr. Parker was undoubtedly one of the most distinguished preachers in nineteenth-century England. In 1884 he resolved to preach through the entire Bible and by three sermons a week he reached his goal in 1891. The legacy of his pulpit effort has been preserved for us in the 25-volume series called *The People's Bible*. Thoughtful preachers have found these expositions stimulating and helpful; indeed some leading homiletics regard them as unequaled in their originality and reliability of interpretation.

The publication of another Parker series, *Studies in Texts*, will be met with enthusiasm and satisfaction among biblical preachers everywhere. In three large volumes (six books altogether), the publisher has gathered together what Parker described as "matter for which I could not find room in my principal work, *The People's Bible*, which contains the life of my very soul." Nicely bound and with a complete scripture index at the end of Book VI, this compendium of sermons and textual reflections will prove to be an admirable supplement to the basic first-hand exegetical work of the contemporary preacher.

DONALD MACLEOD

*New Hope for Congregations*, by Loren B. Mead. Seabury Press, New York, N.Y., 1972. Pp. 128. \$2.95 (paper).

Congregations are increasingly turning to consultants, and Loren Mead explains what they do and why. He is director of Project Text Pattern, a program of the Episcopal Church which has trained seventy parish development consultants now at work from the Pacific Northwest to the Gulf Coast and to New England. He writes, "For over a century now, the churches have been using with great profit a variety of new skills in biblical research and inquiry, historical criticism and form criticism. . . . This book describes some newer God-given skills of



analysis and communication, planning and decision-making, evaluation and management, which are making possible important breakthroughs to new effectiveness for the ministering community, the congregation."

A number of case studies are presented to show how third-party consultation enables congregations to clarify their mission and change their ways. The reader is introduced to the new art of organization development as he watches the consultants at work. This will be the first of many volumes and now is the time to consider the possibilities.

ARTHUR M. ADAMS

*The Ministry in Transition: A Case Study of Theological Education*, by Yoshio Fukuyama. Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, Pa., 1973. Pp. 167. \$9.50.

Implications of studies covering 1191 United Church of Christ pastors, 1283 seminary students, and 8549 laymen are explored in this volume by Yoshio Fukuyama, Professor of Religious Studies at Penn State, a Fellow of the American Sociological Association and former Secretary of Research for the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries.

The data suggest a crisis in vocational commitment among both pastors and students, rooted primarily in confusion about the mission of the Church and the role of ordained personnel. Ministers and seminarians place their highest priorities on study groups and social action projects, while laymen give major importance to church boards and committees and the women's group. Fukuyama challenges Hadden's thesis that pulpit and pew are on "collision course." While ministers are overwhelmingly in favor of civil rights, the laymen exhibit no consensus, for or against. Further, the clergyman is well-trained to engage in the style of ministry most desired by his parishioners, and when asked what further training he would like to have he is most likely to select those fields which would further strengthen his role as pastor and preacher. While he expresses a need to be more active in working for social justice, he is least likely to opt for further study to become more professional in

this role and has only an amateur's knowledge of social organization and political processes. Thus, he tends to see himself and his task in one way and to act in a different manner.

Apparently, a new concept of mission has an intellectual appeal but is at war, either with unconscious inclinations or internalized expectations of others. Naturally, the clergyman is tempted to blame someone else for his plight but the remedy lies with him and his peers: they must clarify the mission, secure consensus, and then develop forms of preparation which will result in professional competence.

Fukuyama sees unprecedented opportunity and peril for the American pastor. The opportunity lies in the capacity of the residential congregation to meet the needs of individuals and families better than any other social organization. The peril lies in the temptation to ignore or make peripheral the more impersonal and public dimensions of parishioners' lives, making religion trivial and socially irresponsible. To overcome this seduction, the author believes we should have a new style of theological education which secures mastery of traditional disciplines with competence in social or political science, plus experience in interdependent group activity.

This is a provocative book which challenges some widely held misconceptions and could lay the groundwork for a new approach to the current situation. The author's assumption that one cannot be an effective change agent without a study of social science appears self-evident to him, and many will agree. However, there are dissenters who will challenge his conclusions on the ground that the major changes of the past have not been wrought by masters of social theory, and may even join the majority at Princeton's prestigious Institute for Advanced Study in questioning the value of social sciences. Perhaps Professor Fukuyama's next book will deal with the value of his discipline as it is applied to the Church.

ARTHUR M. ADAMS

*Creative Congregations: Tested Strategies for Today's Churches*, ed. by Edgar R. Trexler, with Commentary by



Lyle Schaller. Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tenn., 1972. Pp. 143. \$2.45.

This cornucopia of ideas for local churches, overflowing from the experiences of sixteen congregations, is intended to stimulate imagination and inspire new expressions of mission. The cases are grouped under five headings and suggest things which may be done about (1) involving members in the community; (2) minority needs; (3) diversity of programs; (4) co-operative activity; and (5) suburban revitalization. At the conclusion of each of the five sections Lyle Schaller, of the Yokefellow Institute, comments on the cases and describes appropriate processes for comparable situations.

The book has been put together by an associate editor of the *Lutheran*. It will be fruitfully placed in the hands of planning committees when they have reached the stage of exploring a wide variety of possibilities.

ARTHUR M. ADAMS

*The New Consciousness in Science and Religion*, by Harold K. Schilling. Pilgrim Press, Philadelphia, Pa., 1973. Pp. 288. \$7.95.

This is an absorbing, stimulating, helpful, and even devotional book. Harold K. Schilling is emeritus professor of Physics and Dean of the Graduate School of Penn State University. He is a first-rate scientist who is intelligent about physics and the scientific method. Besides, he has a deep interest in theology. And I might add that he communicates a mellow spirit and a mature mind.

For the minister or layman who wishes to make the effort to understand the new physics in depth, the new transcendence in nature, and the meaning of the scientific method for human culture, this book provides competent and fascinating guidance. And in the reading one will be led to pause and engage in a silent and reverent appreciation of the beyond that is within which the author reveals. Dr. Huston Smith is quite right when he remarks that whole sections left him "nothing short of agape with cosmic wonder."

The contents of the volume fall into three major parts, concluding with an Appendix

on the meaning of "mystery," and a Bibliography. Part One deals with the new consciousness of man, its enormous extension of real apprehension; consciousness of the world; awareness of the nature of physical reality; the mystery of reality and the new conscience: revolution by consciousness. In this part the author also treats the post-modern scientific world-view; the significance of mystery for religion; and beliefs and the expansion or construction of consciousness. Part Two discusses many topics: the depth dimension of reality; hierarchies of structures and levels; the vast range of depths; three depth dimensions in matter; the macro- and the micro-worlds, et al. In it he also deals with the symphonic character of matter-energy; the open or closed nature of reality; the depths of time; unity, disunity, creativity and destructiveness of nature; and the flowering of mind and spirit. Part Three leads the reader into insights of the new Biblical religious consciousness. The author discusses intimations of ultimate spirit; "angels"; transcendence and immanence; the meaning of belief in God; the consequence of man's becoming natural; how God works from within nature; God and the future of man and the new earth; the living God and the cosmic Christ.

Schilling does break new ground by bringing contemporary physics and scientific method and Biblical religion together which yields the reader a basic confidence in the goodness of nature whether physical or human. No matter how much we may despair at the terrible suffering and evil of the world, Dr. Schilling points towards a foundational support for adventurous faith and confident hope. And he does it with the clear head of a philosopher, the clean factuality of a scientist, the reflective spirit of a believing theologian, and the mature appreciation of a sensitive soul.

E. G. HOMRIGHAUSEN

*Revelation and Theology*. An analysis of the Barth-Harnack correspondence of 1923, by H. Martin Rumscheidt. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 1972. Pp. 319. \$11.95.

This volume is the first in a series of supplements to the *Scottish Journal of Theology*

published by the Cambridge University Press, who now publish the *Journal* and the occasional papers associated with it. The editors are Professors T. F. Torrance and J.K.S. Reid. If this is the beginning of a series of significant monographs, then we may expect great things in the future.

The main body of this volume consists of an exchange of open letters between Adolf von Harnack, the eminent professor of Church History at the University of Berlin and his former pupil, Karl Barth. They were published in *Christliche Welt* in 1923.

The heart of the exchange consists of fifteen questions posed by Harnack to Barth and "the despisers of scientific theology," and fifteen answers given by Barth in response. In addition there is an open letter to Barth by Harnack, and a postscript to Harnack's open letter to Barth. Dr. Rumscheidt provides an introduction to and an evaluation of the correspondence. The book closes with some Notes (including an illuminating section on Bonhoeffer), a Bibliography and an Index.

In this correspondence we have presented one of the most crucial dialogues in the history of theology, the issues of which are still with us. Here are two sides of a perennial debate centering in the "nature of the theologian's expertise and his understanding of God." Harnack defends the established academic ideal of scientific theology, as an objective study consisting primarily of historical investigation and critical reflection. Barth affirms instead the role of revelation, grace and personal commitment in our understanding of God. Barth argues that to rely on the external proofs and authorities of natural theology would empty the Christian faith of its significance and reality for the individual. He believed that Harnack and the theology he represented had moved far away from the central theme of God's revelation.

This encounter or confrontation between two worlds has a long history. But to understand this phase of it one has to go back to the year 1906, when Barth studied at the "all-star" faculty of the University of Berlin, where Harnack, Holl, Kaftan, Gunkel and Pfleiderer occupied professorial positions of unmatched competence and influence. Here Barth followed Harnack's lectures "with growing enthusiasm," and Harnack was impressed with Barth who was the youngest

student ever to be admitted to Harnack's *colloquia*. No doubt, Barth felt the intellectual and moral power of Harnack. In 1908 Barth went to Marburg to study with Wilhelm Herrmann. From him, Barth learned about the *autopistia* of faith, the transcendence of God, and the impossibility of proving God's existence scientifically. Faith does not need science to legitimize it. From Herrmann, Barth affirmed, he had learned something most basic, which "since I followed it out to its consequences, caused me to say everything else in a wholly different way, even to interpret that most basic matter differently from him."

At Herrmann's feet, Barth was led to a change of direction; here is the beginning of his difference from Harnack. Barth raised radical questions about Harnack's belief that historical knowledge and scientific reflection are the basic tools by which theology grasps the object to be analysed, which is God. Only this way can theology be respected by the cultured, Harnack affirmed.

Then, after a stint as assistant editor of *Christliche Welt*, and two years as assistant pastor in a German-speaking congregation with Dr. Adolf Keller in Geneva, Barth became a rural pastor at Safenwil. Here he studied the Bible avidly. Out of his study, preaching, writing, wrestling with the theology of the time and the cultural situation, grew Barth's new perspective and his radical difference with Harnack's biblical studies. In 1916 he delivered his well-known address, "The New World in the Bible." The message of the Bible is not the story of man's progressive discovery of God, but God's revelation of himself to, with and for man.

He was deeply affected by the influence of the Blumhardts, who found the Bible a testimony to the living and acting God, who is free and sovereign, and who becomes flesh and history for sinful man. Yet, God remains God in his incarnation. God enters time as its crisis, and this becoming temporal makes for a history which leads to the *eschaton*. The actual center of this kingdom of God is the resurrection. This insistence on God's otherness and the emphasis that God is God even when incarnate is central in Barth's theology. (This emphasis upon eschatology was highly distasteful to Harnack.) Only God can make himself real to man, even in his otherness, and that through

the Holy Spirit. Revelation takes place through the Spirit. Christian ethics involves both a waiting for the Kingdom which only God can bring, and hastening in the light of the Coming. Barth found in the Blumhardts men of astounding and unheard of faithfulness and objectivity in the matters of God.

Barth wanted the depth of the Scriptures to become visible and concrete in man's life and existence, to become political, involved in the community, nation, and the world. He rejected Harnack's entire approach which started with the historical, the scientific and the human.

In 1920 the two met at a student conference at Aarau. Harnack read a paper on *Was hat die Historie an fester Erkenntnis zur Deutung des Weltgeschehens zu bieten?* In short, what sound knowledge has history to offer towards the meaning of world history? Barth spoke on *Biblische Fragen, Einsichten und Ausblicke*, or Biblical questions, insights and outlooks. Harnack was not only surprised at what Barth said he was worried, puzzled, and staggered. He thought Barth's charges against his position were scandalous. He was afraid of the effects upon subsequent theology. Harnack had tried all his life to synthesize the knowledge of the world, of the *universitas litterarum* and the knowledge of God; Barth seemed to propose a radical duality, a gnosticism, even a rigid orthodoxy, emotional pietism, subjective romanticism, dogmatic Catholicism. Barth stressed not religion but reality, not history but truth. Two things estranged Harnack from his former pupil: Barth's apparent disdain for critical-historical analysis, and Barth's tendency to draw one's understanding of the material from one's soul which for Harnack meant the free creation of the truth for oneself. Barth had torn apart what Harnack had tried to unite: religion and culture, morality and science, the divine and the human.

Harnack was bewildered by this new biblical theology that blasted the very foundations of the prevailing liberalism of the Harnack school, and affirmed a Christianity which emphasized the otherness of God, the divine initiative in revelation, the necessary (in spite of the impossibility) of preaching the Word of God, the validation of that revelation by God through the Spirit, the gift of faith as the means for appropriating the Gospel promise, and the centrality of the Word of God in theology and preaching. To repeat, Har-

nack accused Barth of not being scientific; Barth accused Harnack of emptying theology of its real task. It was an encounter of different theological worlds. And though fully aware of their radical differences, they maintained their cordial personal relationships right to the end of Harnack's life. Harnack's last years were indeed saddened by the turn of theological events. Did he really understand Barth? Or, did he not wish to understand, knowing that Barth's success would mean the eclipse of his theological position and even his personal religion?

Barth did indeed bring about "a Copernican redirection of Protestant theology" (Berkhof), a "new foundation of evangelical theology" (Moltmann). Barth was interested in deeper questions: What is the unique and all-determining object of theology? If it is the Word of God, how is it to be preached, though no human can really speak of God? In short, he was concerned about the reformation of the church. God's revelation is the precondition of theology which depends upon the freedom and good pleasure of God to reveal himself through the action of the Holy Spirit. Revelation is the event of God's confrontation with man.

Rumschmidt asks whether Barth's work was an *ad hoc* reformation which we have outgrown, or whether it was part of the *ecclesia semper reformanda* and is of perennial concern. He thinks that we are too close to the originating event to make a clear answer. Are we in a post-Barthian period? In some respects we may answer, "Yes." But, may it not also be true that our obsession with certain hermeneutical and existential concerns which speak of "man in a higher key," indicate not only that we have *not really taken Barth's early trumpet blast seriously*, or that we have *fallen behind him and are really pre-Barthians*? Maybe many, if not most, Americans have never "heard" Barth! In our desire to "go beyond Barth," have we been led to another loss of God at the hands of theologians and to another loss of theology as an objective science? Is anyone seriously raising the question, "What is the Church's foundation?" Does theology really help the preacher in the parish to answer the question, or even to take it seriously? What do we really mean by the word "God?" All real reformation—and renewal—in the Church begins with that question!



Rumscheidt writes, "if there is a new reformation of theology and Church going on in our century we must seriously consider Barth's 'reveille' as a contributing factor." And in face of this exchange between Harnack and Barth, the author concludes, "It is not inappropriate to conclude that Karl Barth does indeed 'ring a bell' for us today." But, is anyone listening?

E. G. HOMRIGHAUSEN

*The New Man: An Orthodox and Reformed Dialogue*, edited by John Meyendorff and Joseph McLelland. Standard Press, New Brunswick, N.J., 1973. Pp. 170. \$4.50.

This volume contains a series of presentations given at three annual consultations (1968, 1969, 1970) between Reformed and Orthodox theologians in the interest of mutually exploring the doctrinal positions of these two great Christian traditions. Included are an irenic and informing Preface by Archbishop Iakanos and an interesting and illuminating Introduction by President James I. McCord of Princeton Theological Seminary.

The first round of meetings dealt with the place of creeds and confessions in the two groups; the second centered in the problem of history and authority; and the third discussed two questions: the critical role of second-century Christianity, and the Eastern conception of "divinisation" or *theosis* as compared with the Western conception of "sanctification." The volume concludes with a concise summary of the meetings and their issues by Meyendorff, and a good Bibliography on many aspects of the Orthodox tradition.

It is assumed in these consultations that efforts at Christian unity must go beyond common efforts in life and work, and involve matters of faith and order. It is also recognized that the great schism between the East and the West lies "like a delicate scar tissue at the very heart of Christendom"; that there are temperamental differences of long-standing between East and West; that political powers and tensions have produced deep chasms between the two; that irreparable damage was done by the West to the

East in the Fourth Crusade; that long years of isolation have produced estrangement, ignorance and even suspicion between the two.

In his Introduction, President McCord adds interesting comments about the growing relation between East and West. Calvin, for instance, appreciated the Greek Fathers. And in this century three major factors have contributed to this renewal of contact between the two traditions: 1. the presence of the great Magyar Reformed Church in East Europe with a total constituency of four million whose roots are in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union; 2. the geographical spread of the Reformed Churches in the Near and Middle East; and 3. the situation in North America which is devoid of old European political tensions and therefore provides a freer climate in which Orthodox and Reformed churches can live, consult and work together in an increased secular society.

While there is some repetition as is to be expected in such a series of addresses, the substance of the discussion is most informing, honest and appreciative. The authors include George Hendry, Stanley Harakas, C. Samuel Calian, John Meyendorff, Stuart Currie, John D. Zizioulas, John W. Beardslee III, and Robert G. Stephanopoulos. The subjects deal with the issues discussed in the three consultations: the place and function of confession and creed in the two traditions, the Eighth Day (hope and eschatology), historical relativism and authority in Christian dogma, the Christian community in the second century, the Eucharistic community and the catholicity of the Church, sanctification and *theosis* in the Churches, the place of *epiclesis* in the Eucharist, and the role of Mary (*theotokos*) as the second Mother Eve and norm of human holiness. Meyendorff provides a succinct review of the discussions and summaries of the three consultations held at Princeton (1968), Brookline (1969), and Princeton (1970). The volume concludes with a short bibliography on Orthodoxy now available in English. A list of the twelve participants is also provided, seven Orthodox and five Reformed.

None of these chapters represents formal agreements; rather they are descriptive, open and informal. A better understanding of Orthodoxy was gained by the Reformed par-



ticipants, and vice versa. It is significant that great appreciation was experienced in defining the Holy Spirit as the ultimate authority in the Church, and in seeing the Church as the locus where participation in Christ's life becomes a reality in a living communion. There was a happy surprise when the Orthodox got a different impression of the meaning of Calvinistic predestination and the Reformed got a different impression of Orthodox "synergy" and "divinisation." Terms were clarified and a breakthrough resulted.

Dr. McLelland confesses that there is a long way to go to gain the understanding that leads to unity in God's truth and life. He asks pragmatic questions in face of the wide differences in the liturgies of the two traditions, "Can a good Presbyterian take all that ceremony with genuine feeling? Or can a good Orthodox stand such sober listening to all that preaching?" Yet, he agrees that there is a common sharing of faith in Christ in the Eucharist or Lord's Supper. But the Reformed sacramental teaching has been cast within such a controversial context that it is hard to state a positive profile for presentation to a non-western group. "If our western classical theism is guilty of isolating God by its theoretics then dialogue with Orthodoxy may well be the therapy we need."

The participants and their authorizing bodies believe that the dialogue must continue, for unity without a reconciliation between East and West is inconceivable. And McCord adds that "unity is not an end, but it is a step towards the clearer proclamation of the Word by which all men are saved."

E. G. HOMRIGHAUSEN

*The Ground of Certainty*, by Donald Bloesch. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1971. Pp. 212. \$3.25.

*The Ground of Certainty* by Donald Bloesch, professor of Theology at Dubuque Theological Seminary, presents a view which is diverse from traditional thinking on the relation between theology and philosophy. The relationship is not in terms of synthesis, correlation or subordination but the transformation of philosophical meanings in the light of Biblical revelation. In other words,

reason and philosophy can serve theology but they cannot determine the truth of revelation. Philosophy must be in obedience to revelation.

The whole thrust of the volume is in opposition to a conceptual framework for theology, a *weltanschauung*, a rationalistic philosophy which makes the Christian faith fit into a definitive world view. He puts it this way, "But the divine revelation shatters all man-made systems and reminds us that the all-encompassing perspective is the possession only of God."

He takes issue with both liberal and evangelical Christians. He examines the neo-orthodox, the secular or radical, the revolutionary and the neo-evangelical positions and finds each one lacking and dependent upon human reason to a lesser or greater degree. He believes that the Christian faith does not require metaphysical support, it can stand on its "own foundation and is self-authenticating."

He examines this viewpoint in the light of the history of theology from the apostles to the present time. What then are the reasons for faith in Jesus Christ? They are the witness of the Scriptures, the resurrection of Christ and the assurance of salvation, but these are the reasons presented in revelation itself and not reached independently of revelation. If one were to identify Bloesch's position with theologians who are akin to his view, Forsyth, Kierkegaard, Pascal, Edwards, Luther, Calvin and Irenaeus might be listed although he differs from each one somewhat at certain points. "My position is much closer to fideism than to rationalism in that I see faith as determining reason and not vice versa."

One might question the rather insignificant role which he assigns to enlightened and illuminated reason under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Man desires to formulate and to explain what he believes so that reason actually does help to shape a Christian view of God, of man and of the world.

It is a thoughtful volume and will help to break the hold that rationalistic philosophy has held over Christianity.

EDWIN H. RIAN

*The Modern Military in American Society: A Study in the Nature of Military Power*, by Charles Walton Ackley.

Westminster Press, Philadelphia, Pa.  
1972. Pp. 400. \$10.95.

For twenty years a Navy chaplain and now a professor of philosophy at California State Polytechnic College, Charles Ackley has combined his military experience, his religious commitment and his philosopher's penchant for setting forth the ideal society to produce a readable, middle of the road treatise on how the military and the civil society ought to be related.

Ackley's fundamental thesis is that America has never come to rational terms with its own—now awesome—military might. The military as a whole has tended either to be hypocritically rejected or cynically allowed to do its worst (p. 319) by the larger American society. The solution lies in an unprecedented, creative interpenetration of civilian and military society because they are at root one and the same society.

Neither an apologist for the military nor an ideological critic, Ackley finds villains and heroes on both sides of the usual fence. He admires certain aspects of Army and Navy tradition—its basic humanity, its cool rationality, its efficient structure. Indeed, "we have more to fear from civilian leaders who become fascinated with military gamesmanship and the role of commander-in-chief (the Kaiser, Hitler, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon) than the armies they created and commanded . . ." (p. 317). Ackley believes that civilian society has something to learn from the military about keeping a cool head under pressure.

The Air Force, the newest of the services, does not fare so well in Ackley's hands as the tradition-bound Army and Navy. Fasci-

nated with technology, it continually runs the risk of a fatal utilitarianism in which machine masters man. The National Guard runs the Air Force a close second for unconscious chicanery because it lacks either expert civilian control or professional staff leadership. A fumbling monster, it can on occasions such as Kent State kill innocent people.

Ackley wants both a more professional military and more civilian control. A volunteer Army would accomplish the first, but not the second. The draft neglects the first and probably does not accomplish the second either. What is needed is a modification of universal military training in which *all* citizens would be trained for a period for public service, military or civilian, depending on individual preference. Only so, the author insists, will the military take its place as the careful, efficient, responsible power arm of a responsible society.

An obviously wise, experienced and humane man, Ackley nevertheless offers all his wisdom and experience within the context of an assumed, inevitable militarism. The book lacks any hope beyond the hope of a more responsible use of military power. Perhaps that is after all the only real hope there is; but if so, I doubt if the lofty sense of responsibility he advocates can rise from the lead weight of his presuppositions. Ackley lets his imagination be controlled by what he thinks he can rationally accomplish. When that happens, one often does not accomplish a great deal.

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## Book Notes

by DONALD MACLEOD

FRITSCH, Charles T. *The Qumran Community: Its History and Scrolls*. Biblo & Tannen, New York, N.Y., 1972. Pp. viii + 147. \$7.50.

Published by The Macmillan Company in 1956, this volume has long been a standard work on the manuscript finds at Qumran which have proved to be invaluable for Old Testament, Intertestamental and New Testament Studies. This reprint features a new introduction which includes a description of the latest Temple Scroll brought to light during the Six Day War in Israel.

The book describes the archaeological investigations of the community building at Qumran and the major manuscripts found in the caves, as well as the process of assembling the thousands of fragments discovered in the floors of the caves. It also includes a history of the Qumran Community (Essenes) and a thorough discussion of the significance of the scrolls for biblical studies and our better understanding of the origins of Christianity.

(Copies are available at Biblo & Tannen, Booksellers and Publishers, Inc., 63 Fourth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10003 or at The Theological Book Agency, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J. 08540.)

STUEMPFLE, Herman G., Jr. (ed.). *Preaching in the Witnessing Community*. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, Pa., 1973. Pp. 104. \$2.95 (paper).

This paperback has one weakness but many strengths. It is unfortunately a mixed bag, but for contemporary sermons these chapters are satisfyingly original and refreshingly biblical. The introductory chapter on "Preaching in the Witnessing Community" by Professor Stuempfle of Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary is brief but it succeeds in delineating the nature and place of preaching as witness within the context of the church's mission. Thirteen sermons follow from al-

most as many denominational representatives (there is no Presbyterian) and types of ministerial vocations. Preachers will find these pages stimulating and theologically stabilizing.

MANCINI, Fr. Ignazio. *The Fifth Gospel: A Parable about the Land of Christ*. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1972. Pp. 247. \$15.00.

In the Preface the editor suggests the purpose and point of this book: "The Holy Places, like the Four Gospels, have the unique power to help us know Christ better and to place us in the presence of the mystery of his life and death" (p. 7). In an artistic and ambitious project the editor, designers and photographers of this volume have succeeded in recreating the Holy Land for the pilgrim who attempts to walk in the footsteps of Christ and for others who will enjoy these pages without ever leaving their homes. The photographs and descriptive sections bear out the truth of Châteaubriand's remark that "the Holy Land is the only country on earth which reminds the traveller of things both human and heavenly, and which, precisely because of these associations, arouses impressions and thoughts in the depths of the soul which no other place inspires." As a presentation gift or memento, this beautiful volume, with its color photographs and clear composition, will receive the special and singular appreciation the editor and publishers deserve.

EARNSHAW, Leslie. *Worship for the Seventies*, Denholm House, Surrey, 1973. Pp. 128. 80p.

Not often does a parish minister write about worship both as an informed liturgical student and as an eminent practitioner. A Methodist pastor in England, Mr. Earnshaw, in the course of fourteen brief chapters, discusses worship in the contemporary church

from the perspectives of tradition and present need. He has read widely in the field and addresses us and our liturgical problems with insight and sobriety. He maintains an even balance between past resources and present creativity and spells out for us the means and methods by which the local diet of worship can be the meeting place of these two elements. Moreover, he argues for recognition of the "mystery dimension" as the *sine qua non* of the beginning of all worship and he stands up unabashed before the humanists for whom worship is an exercise in interior analysis and the faddists who exhort us merely to celebrate life. He has many helpful things to say about vocabulary in worship, the involvement of the congregation, the necessary ingredients of the liturgical act, and our responsibility to make real in the church the great proclamations of our common faith.

ROBERTSON, James D. (ed.). *Handbook of Preaching Resources from Literature*. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1972 (reprint of 1962 edition). Pp. 268. \$2.95.

A professor of preaching, James D. Robertson, at Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky, has compiled and classified 657 striking quotations on 177 religious themes from as far back as Chaucer and as recent as T. S. Eliot. "The most obvious advantage of a work of this nature," writes the author, "is that it offers in accessible form values from books too numerous and too voluminous to have always at hand." This collection has a further advantage: the selections have been made by a preacher with an eye to cogent expression and the making of a moral or spiritual point. Moreover, the editor is a lover of the classics and has a friendly comradeship with the ideas and writings of the "literary greats." This resource book, if used properly, will give an inspirational touch to some arid stretch of an otherwise pedestrian homiletical effort.

WILLIAMS, Dick (ed.). *Prayers for Today's Church*. CPAS Publications, London, 1972. Pp. 210. £1.70.

To edit independently a book of prayers when each denomination is producing simul-

taneously its own service book may seem to be a redundancy. Dick Williams' book, however, can easily send worship commissions back to their workshops or write off their efforts as being superfluous. Among a score of recent publications few collections of prayers can be said to reflect as much as these "the aspirations and preoccupations of our present age." The editor writes and selects from a sober perspective. He says, "Nobody has ever written better prayers in English than Crammer. But the English language is a living thing, and changes." What he has set out to do, then, is to steer a course "between the hoary cliffs of archaic English and the murderous rocks of contemporary vulgarity." His resources were "prayers written by myself, prayers sent at will, and prayers solicited from friends whose interests lie in this direction." Altogether there are 486 prayers (collects, litanies, etc.) in this collection, arranged under headings reflecting a wide range of traditional and contemporary themes and needs. This is an exciting book—rich, thoughtful, and alive.

CARTER, James E. *A Sourcebook for Stewardship Sermons*. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1972. Pp. 197. \$2.95 (paper).

Stewardship is a basic word in the Christian's vocabulary. Surprisingly, however, the available resource material for stewardship sermons has been traditionally in short supply. A Louisianan Baptist minister, James E. Carter, has compiled a collection of very suggestive original discussions of various aspects of stewardship and has supplemented them with thoughtful excerpts from leading preachers and devotional writers. "My conception of Christian stewardship," writes Carter, "is that it is the total response of the individual to the grace of God." This conviction influences the writer's choice of materials and his perspective upon the spirit and bases of stewardship. Preachers for whom stewardship sermons have become a chore will find here fresh insights and useful illustrative materials to vitalize their message.

WALLIS, Charles L. *American Epitaphs: Grave and Humorous*. Dover



Publications, New York, N.Y., 1973. Pp. 272. \$3.00 (paper).

This is a fascinating book. It informs, entertains, and illustrates. Professor Wallis of Keuka College, Keuka Park, N.Y., has collected 750 epitaphs representative of each decade in American history and from all sections of the country. "The book offers the first approach to a comprehensive collection of humorous, curious, and historically significant American inscriptions" (Preface). The compiler of this unusual type of Americana writes, "Epitaphs suggest a social pattern of a locality and of a generation. They reflect the temper and mood of a period . . . they mirror the thoughts and skills of the common man." This is a volume to be enjoyed by the solitary reader or used as the basis for an illuminating evening with a study or interest group in the local congregation.

GORDON, Ernest, & FUNK, Peter. *Guidebook for the New Christian*. Harper & Row, New York, N.Y., 1972. Pp. 145. \$4.95.

This book fulfills adequately the implications of its title: it is a guidebook for Christian beginners. In the course of fifteen chapters the authors, working jointly and by "point-by-point discussions, stories from their own experience, and examples from extensive counselling, guide the new Christian who seeks to put faith to work in day-to-day living." The discussion begins with the meaning of following Jesus today and then presents an outline for the building of a truly "Christian life-style." Ernest Gordon is Dean of the Chapel at Princeton University and Peter Funk, a free-lance writer and the author of several books, supplies the month feature "It Pays to Increase Your Word Power" for *Reader's Digest*. This is not merely a "how to" book. The practice of the Christian faith is set within the community of God's people, the Church, and the Word and Sacraments are the means by which spiritual nourishment comes to us. Ministers will find these chapters exceedingly useful for study groups and confirmation classes.

BAIRD, Jesse Hays, *Land of the Pilgrim's Pride*. John Knox Press, Richmond, Va., 1973. Pp. 126. \$5.95.

Known generally as a churchman and educator, Jesse H. Baird is also a superb story teller. After a distinguished career as a pastor, seminary president, moderator of the United Presbyterian Church, and world traveler, Dr. Baird has set down in fascinating literary form his reflections upon his ancestral origins, the character and destiny of America as a people, and the various ethnic and cultural threads that have given to our country its peculiar distinction and genius. Dr. Baird has done his homework well. He has researched rumor and tale to give them the authentic note of history and in each dramatic incident he reminds us non-directively of the assets we would do well to preserve. This is an ideal volume to present to a friend.

BARR, Browne. *The Ministering Congregation*, Pilgrim Press, Philadelphia, Pa., 1972. Pp. 127. \$4.95.

This slim volume was written jointly by co-ministers, Browne Barr and Mary Eakin, of the First Congregational Church, Berkeley, California. Some of the material from Dr. Barr's pen had appeared in articles in *The Christian Century*. However, this book brings us a whole wealth of ideas which fill out "the larger story of the ministering church in our time." The underlying conviction of both authors is "that the pressing need of American Christianity is for a strengthening and renewal of the ministry of all believers." This need must come into sharp focus within the local congregation where, as Dr. Barr suggests, the community of God's people "must stand up and be heard and share its experience and make its claim and share its responsibility." Through the course of nine succinct chapters this monograph gives us a refreshing picture of a church as a community in mission whose *raison d'être* is found in its character and whose ideal is to be Christ's presence in the world. This is an honest book. Its substance is basic and its mood reassuring.



